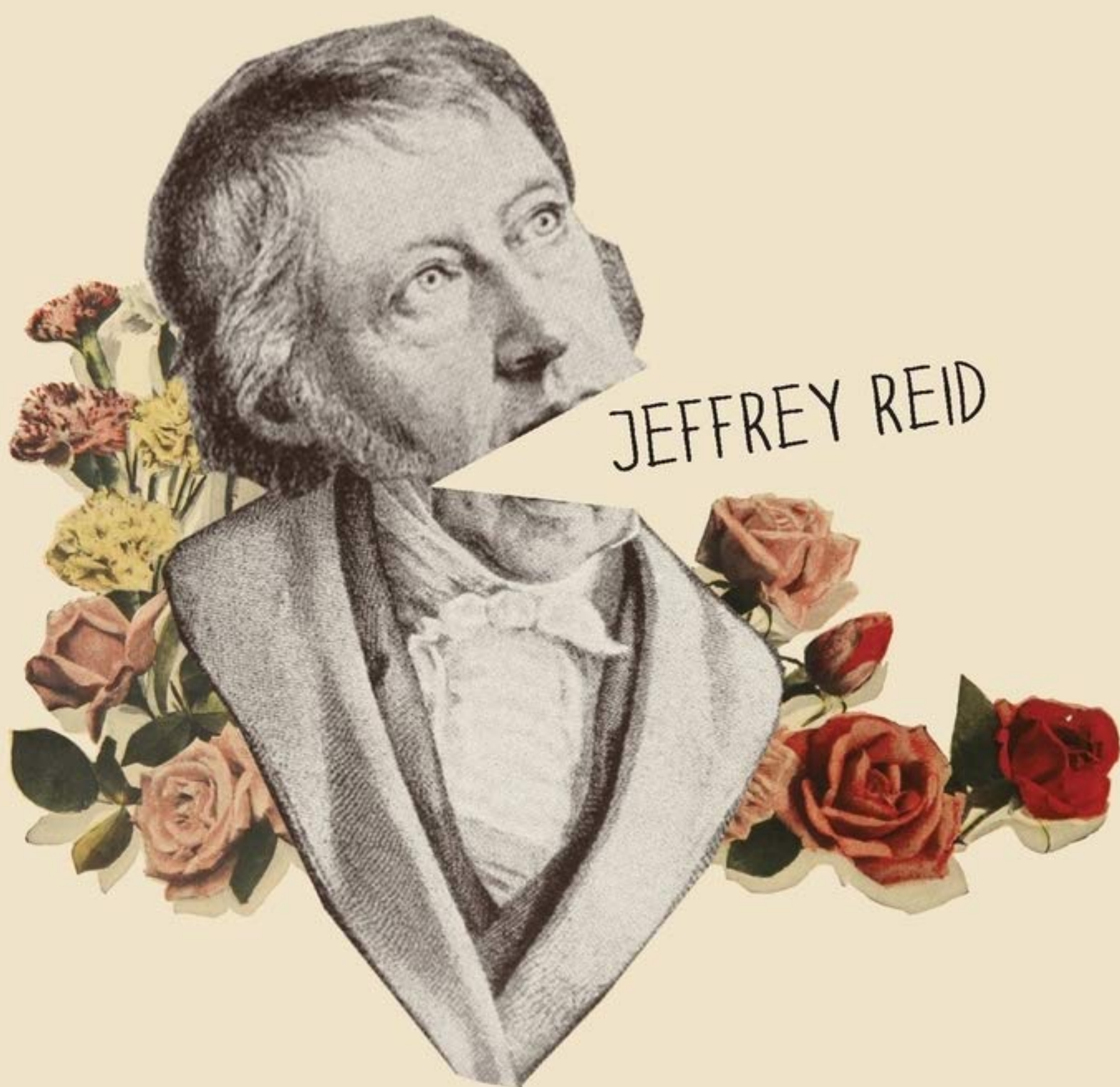




# THE ANTI- ROMANTIC

HEGEL AGAINST IRONIC ROMANTICISM



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# The Anti-Romantic

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The Anti-Romantic  
Hegel Against Ironic Romanticism

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**Bloomsbury Academic**

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square  
London  
WC1B 3DP  
UK

1385 Broadway  
New York  
NY 10018  
USA

**[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com)**

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First published 2014

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**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4725-7481-7  
ePDF: 978-1-4725-7482-4  
ePub: 978-1-4725-7483-1

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

*To my loved ones*



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## Acknowledgments

This book is a new, revised, augmented, translated edition of my *L' anti-romantique: Hegel contre le romantisme ironique* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007, with the support of the Centre canadien d'études allemandes et européennes). Versions of Intermezzo 1 have appeared in Jere Surber (ed.), *Hegel and Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), and in my *Real Words: Language and System in Hegel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Coda 1, "Galvanism and Excitability in Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of the Fragment," appeared in *Clio* 38.1 (Fall 2008).

I would like to thank Jean-François Marquet for his philosophical inspiration. I would also like to thank John Burbidge, Stephen Houlgate, Simon Lumsden, and Jere Surber for their helpful comments on this book.

## Introduction

It is safe to say that, in this book, more will be learned about Hegel than will be learned about those representatives of Early German Romanticism that I am dealing with: Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher. My intention is not to compare Hegel's thought with the Romantics'—attempting to present each in a neutral way, bringing them together in a philosophical confrontation that might be observed objectively, in order to declare a winner or perhaps a draw, maybe even concluding with a fair-minded synthesis showing that Hegel is romantic and the Romantics are Hegelian.

Such a confrontation, according to my way of proceeding, could only take place if it were textually based, and while it is clear that Hegel has much to say about Early German (or Jena) Romanticism, the latter, which blossoms before Hegelian philosophy finds its wings, remains mute with regard to him. Our question is, consequently, the following: how does Hegel understand the Early Romantic movement and its main protagonists? I will not attempt to prove or demonstrate how his interpretation is or is not faithful. Let it be said right away that Hegel's interpretation is unfaithful, to the extent that it is strongly critical and even polemical. As such, the Hegelian interpretation is far from demonstrating or presenting a comprehensive knowledge of the theories and works of the Jena Romantics, but rather shows itself to be highly selective regarding them. Hegel hardly ever refers directly to the actual works of the Romantics. When he does highlight a key expression in their writings, in order to make it the pivotal point of his critical enterprise, we notice, looking closely at the texts that Hegel might have been familiar with, that the expression often only appears in a marginal fashion and in a context alien to the one evoked in the Hegelian critique.

Although it would be impossible to adequately present here an intellectual movement as rich and multidimensional as the one found in Jena Romanticism, I will quote, in endnotes, passages from the thinkers that Hegel deals with, in order to provide some insight into their own thoughts. In giving them voice, we may better appreciate their differences (or similarities) with regard to Hegel's critique. In the same vein, I have added two short chapters, in appendix, where I attempt to faithfully present Friedrich Schlegel's theory of irony and the literary fragment, as well as Novalis's *Logological Fragments*, divorced from any

reference to Hegel. These Codas, along with the quoted passages from Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher, will serve not only to show what Hegel may have found to be opposed to his own philosophy, but to give readers the possibility of establishing, for themselves, to what extent Hegel's interpretation is justified.<sup>1</sup> For an interpretation may (and must) be both unfaithful and justified.

Jena Romanticism represents, for Hegel, a tendency that is radically different from his own thought and indeed opposed to it, in the same way that Platonism perceives Sophistic thought antagonistically. In other words, Hegel considers Jena or ironic Romanticism as fundamentally anti-philosophical, and the question, "How does Hegel understand Romanticism?" can tell us as much about his philosophy as the question, "How does Plato understand the Sophists?" can tell us about Platonism. Briefly put, what I am interested in is the difference Hegel – Romanticism as Hegel himself felt and conceived it, which is to say according to the threat that Romanticism posed to the system that is Science.

In spite of its unfaithfulness (or because of it), the Hegelian interpretation of Romanticism is very strong—so strong in fact that it determined the fate of romantic thought until its reevaluation in the twentieth century, in particular following the work of Walter Benjamin.<sup>2</sup> However, even if the Hegelian critique did prove determinant, what I believe constitutes the strength of that interpretation has never been adequately apprehended. In understanding Hegel's critique of Romanticism solely with reference to a critique of particular subjectivity, the essential aspect has been missed: the fact that such subjectivity can only be defined with respect to objectivity, with respect to the world. Hegel's deep intuition, which underlies his entire critique of Romanticism, is that ironic subjectivity posits a world that excludes any possibility of objective truth, in order to then escape or reject this world, either in pleasure-seeking, through inner feeling or in death. The Hegelian interpretation of Early Romanticism cannot be understood without comprehending the ironic attitude toward the world, i.e. without considering the world that it implies. It is this comprehension that forms the foundation of the Hegelian critique of the Jena movement. If his criticism is particularly polemical, it is because Hegel fully understands that the objectivity of the ironic world is formed at the expense of an objectivity that is radically other—one that underlies speculative philosophy and without which there can be neither meaning nor truth. Subjective irony rejects the existence of the world posited by Hegelian Science.

Otto Pöggeler's doctoral thesis, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*,<sup>3</sup> represents a fundamental resource—first for the breadth of the work (which brings together, with synoptic erudition, many of the Hegel texts dealing with the Romantics)

and then for its uniqueness (it is the only other major scholarly work on the subject). Occasional reference to that monograph will at least contribute to introducing Pöggeler's important analysis to a broader audience.

Pöggeler's work has nonetheless several theoretical drawbacks, and, in particular, the following: while affirming that Hegel's critique of Romanticism involves theoretical concerns that are central to his body of work, Pöggeler only brings to light the subjective side of these. He apprehends the Hegelian critique of the Romantics solely with reference to a critique of particular subjectivity, which appears in three forms: abstract subjectivity, bad subjectivity, and conflicted subjectivity. Because Pöggeler leaves aside the objective consequences of this critique, he is able to only attach romantic irony to the first of these subjective forms—the one corresponding to the figure of Friedrich Schlegel—without seeing that Hegel attributes to “bad subjectivity” (which is, for Pöggeler, the beautiful soul) as well as to “conflicted subjectivity” (forms of feeling and unhappy consciousness) their own ironic expressions. It is only by recognizing the objective repercussions of the ironic forms of individual subjectivity that we may appreciate irony's destructive action and its scandalous nature, for Hegel. As well, the lack of reflection on objectivity leaves aside Hegel's criticism of the actual *forms* of ironic expression. Consequently, we lose the whole linguistic dimension of this critique, which finds, in the discourses of ironic Romanticism, forms of predication that are opposed, in a literally barbarous fashion, to the discourse of Hegelian Science and the world that it is meant to engender.

The other problematical aspect of Pöggeler's thesis has again to do with a failure to recognize the very real difference between the two schools of thought. By submerging Hegel and the Romantics into the historical concept of the *Goethezeit*, Pöggeler tends to drown or to mask the radical opposition between the two types of thought, an opposition that underlies, once again, any adequate grasp of Hegel's critique.<sup>4</sup> While it is undeniable that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, philosophy confronts a certain number of common demands (for example, how to re-think the Kantian thing-in-itself), using a more or less definite number of operating concepts (reflection, will, self-positing, intuition...), and that these aspects, taken together, form a specific historical epoch in philosophical thought, it is essential to not allow crucial and fruitful distinctions to be flattened out. This is particularly the case where such essentially opposed types of thinking are involved.

The explicit Hegelian references to the Early Romantics constitute the empirical data of the present work. It is only based on those data that the

concepts related to romantic thought are discovered and examined. Such a procedure may seem self-evident, but since most of the explicit references to the romantic protagonists discussed occur on the margins of Hegel's work, often in less studied texts, it might be tempting to begin right away by elaborating upon "romantic notions" at the core of Hegel's body of work, for example the beautiful soul in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in order to then apply them to or impose them on the personalities of Romanticism.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, my work shows that the general concepts are best understood when they are drawn from the romantic personalities themselves, although it is impossible to relate, in a unilateral way, one figure to one concept, or vice versa. In other words, the best way to determine the Hegelian grasp of critical romantic irony is by drawing it from the ironic individuality that is Friedrich Schlegel; the best way to comprehend the irony of the beautiful soul is by drawing it from the individual soul that is Novalis. However, this does not mean that the beautiful soul is exclusively Novalis, nor that critical individuality is only Schlegel, nor that sentimental religiosity is solely incarnated in Schleiermacher.

Nonetheless, based on these core individualities, other artists and thinkers belonging more or less to Early Romanticism, and appearing sporadically in Hegel's writings, can be identified and understood. For example, we can see how Hegel comes to terms with Kleist or Tieck based on the figures (or even archetypes) of thought represented by Schlegel and Novalis. This is because, in the last two individuals, and in Schleiermacher, we discover three elements of Hegelian thought that are as closely related as were the three main participants in the *Symphilosophie* of the *Athenäum* review, in Jena.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the texts referring explicitly to the Romantics that are addressed in the present study appear in Hegel's later work, at a time when his thought is fully mature. This might lead one to believe that the critique of the romantic current only took shape toward the untimely end of his life and that Hegel himself might have undergone a progressively anti-romantic evolution, thus leading one to suppose an original period where his thought corresponded to theirs, a period when Hegel was "romantic." I do not believe this to be the case. On one hand, if we take "romantic" in a narrow sense, as it applies uniquely to Jena or Early Romanticism, it is clear that this movement, which only found full expression between 1798 and 1800, is essentially finished when Hegel arrives in that town, in January 1801. Further, and in a deeper sense, Hegel's writings from that period demonstrate that his "Scientific" way of thinking, already in development, is already clearly distinct from the thought presented by the *Athenäum* circle.

The essential content of Hegelian Science is its grasp of the human affair (*Sache*), i.e. the world, which, according to my argument, is not the same as the one posited by Romanticism. In Berne, Hegel is interested in dogmatic religion, in faith, and the State constitution. In Frankfurt, his writings deal with Judaism, with James Steuart's *Political Economy*, with the spirit of Christianity, and, from 1801, in Jena, with the constitution of the German Empire. Attempting to discover romanticism in Hegel's youthful enthusiasm for liberalism, in his early attempts to see love as a concept reconciling subject and object,<sup>7</sup> or in his period of vacillation in Frankfurt implies a notion of "romantic" that is largely alien to the one expressed in the ironic Romanticism of Jena. What the evolution of Hegel's thought shows is rather a toughening with regard to Jena Romanticism, the staking out of a contrary position whose first major stand can be found, although not always easily, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and whose final articulations form a critique of romantic irony, at Berlin.

The fact that the critique of Early Romanticism gathers strength, in writings and lectures, more than 20 years after the demise of the movement itself already indicates that Hegel does not consider the ironic current to be dead. Indeed, the polemical tone that we find in the later texts shows that his treatment of the movement goes beyond a purely historical purpose, i.e. the simple will to faithfully account for all that comes earlier. In fact, one is left with the strong impression that, as opposed to every other "past" form of thought he targets, Hegel does not manage to overcome the ironic tendency; that it does not allow itself to be easily assimilated through philosophical *Aufhebung* (suspension); and that Hegel considers himself, especially in the last years of his life, confronted by a contemporary current of thought, and its discourse, that stand radically opposed to his own.

If my thesis is correct, namely that, from Hegel's point of view, romantic discourse brings about a reality alien to that of speculative Science, then this would imply that our philosopher, at the height of his career, at the moment when his thought enjoyed both official and general consecration, would have seen himself living in a world threatened by a "new" reality, one engendered by romantic irony and standing opposed to the world in which absolute spirit is meant to take place. Such a result flies in the face of all those who would like to see in Hegel an apologist of actuality—of *all* actuality—by taking the expression "the real is rational" literally, without understanding the speculative meaning of the copula "is." The world is only rational to the extent that it is penetrated by thought, i.e. to the extent that it becomes *logos*, in which humans may recognize

themselves. Ultimately, it is around the nature of *logos* that the difference Hegel – Romanticism is drawn, and which is at stake in the present book.

As mentioned, the Hegel texts referring to Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher make up the principal data upon which this work is based. The book is consequently divided into three chapters, bearing the names of the individuals in question. The titles of the subchapters cumulatively trace out the progressive portrayal of Hegel's representation of each thinker, bringing to light his particular ironic expression. More concretely, it is because Schlegel expresses *himself* in his writings, according to Hegel, as a seducing, dominating, hypocritical, and sophistical individual that his particular form of critical irony is defined by these characteristics. It is because Novalis reveals *himself* to be deeply melancholic, in his *Hymns to the Night*, and actually dies of consumption, that his particular form of irony takes the form of a pathological self-negation. And it is because Schleiermacher is a Pastor while at the same time defending what was, for Hegel, the scandalous novel *Lucinde*, that his religion of feeling will always be the hypocritical expression of sentimental self-satisfaction. Such a method is perfectly coherent in that Hegel considers romantic irony to be an expression of subjective individuality articulating itself in discourse. Ironic discourse is the truth of the romantic individual quite simply because the content of such language is entirely subjective. Knowing whether or not Schlegel was “really” a seducer, in his natural life, or whether Novalis was “really” nihilistic in his everyday life is of no interest to Hegelian Science. It is only to the extent that the romantic individual takes the form of discourse that Science takes him into account.

According to the Scientific account, the individual figures of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis are presented as two archetypal expressions of modern irony—each representing a unilateral moment of Hegelian thought, each one fixed in its immediate relation to objectivity. Only as a result of this conceptual duality is it possible to understand the argument concerning Schleiermacher. This is the case because the exclusively empirical and skeptical positions that Schlegel and Novalis express (in their barbaric relation to the true objectivity of Hegelian Science) are essential elements in the Hegelian portrayal of Schleiermacher as a monstrous hybrid of the two unilateral tendencies. However, as we will see, the real importance of the Hegelian figure of Schleiermacher is to be found in the worldly aspect Hegel assigns to the “three absolute presuppositions of *our time*,” which the theologian of feeling incarnates: we can know nothing of the truth (i.e. skepticism); we can only know finite things (i.e. empiricism); and thus, feeling is the only remaining way of attaining the truth, which is relegated to the

Beyond. In other words, the fact that the critique is aimed at a contemporary of Hegel's, with whom he taught at the University of Berlin, 20 years after the disappearance of the Jena romantic circle, after the death of Novalis, and after Schlegel's Catholic conversion, clearly shows that the barbarity of romantic irony, exemplified in Schleiermacher's theology, expresses a current of thought that is thoroughly present and actual.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, in the Conclusion, I advance the possibility that Hegel, at Berlin, saw himself living in a world whose absolute presuppositions were those of romantic irony. Further, the critique that he levels at those presuppositions, in all their actuality, may be seen as a critique of a world coming after (in both senses of the word) the objective truth of Science, and which we might recognize as "postmodern."





## Friedrich Schlegel

*I didn't merely feel pleasure, but felt pleasure and took pleasure in it.*

Friedrich Schlegel

Friedrich Schlegel,<sup>1</sup> head of the group that formed in 1798 around the *Athenäum* review, in Jena, and principal theoretician of romantic irony, is the central figure in Hegel's critique of Early German Romanticism. This opinion is shared by such key commentators as Ernst Behler<sup>2</sup> and Otto Pöggeler.<sup>3</sup> Behler goes as far as to say that Schlegel "appears quite regularly in central positions in Hegel's writings,"<sup>4</sup> a claim based, above all, on the figure of "evil" that Schlegel allegedly represents in the Morality chapter of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>5</sup> Evil that is unmasked to reveal itself as hypocrisy would thus be the author of the scandalous novel *Lucinde* (Schlegel), along with its defender, Schleiermacher.<sup>6</sup> On this reading, Schlegel becomes a central figure in the *Phenomenology*'s progression toward Absolute Knowing—a path also involving the moment of forgiveness, which supposedly represents Hegel himself. In the same vein, we might read, as does Emanuel Hirsch, the entire chapter on Morality as a philosophical evolution from Kant to Hegel, one that necessarily takes into account the Early Romanticism of Schlegel and Novalis, as well as the philosophies of Jacobi, Fichte, and even Hölderlin, whom Hirsch associates rather idiosyncratically with the figure of the "hard heart."<sup>7</sup> However, even if we could unequivocally attach each of the figures in the chapter on Morality to the protagonists of Jena Romanticism, this still would not adequately demonstrate the centrality of Schlegel in Hegelian thought, because the centrality of the *Phenomenology* itself in Hegel's body of work would still have to be proven, as would the pivotal importance of the Morality chapter, both of which are open questions.

I believe, rather, that Schlegel's importance in Hegel is a direct result of their radical difference. Indeed, in them, as Behler also writes, "two types of German philosophical thinking enter into conflict [...] each remaining in an irreconcilable and insurmountable contradiction of principle with regard to the

other.”<sup>8</sup> In my opinion, the contradiction between these two ways of thinking resonates far beyond the confines of nineteenth-century German philosophy.

Still, from a historical point of view, although the difference may reach as far back as Jena, where Hegel appeared unimpressed by the course Schlegel gave at the University there, in 1801,<sup>9</sup> Hegel’s critique only becomes explicit more than a decade after the publication of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>10</sup> The question as to why Hegel waited until Berlin to criticize Schlegel cannot be dissociated from how Hegel conceives of romantic irony itself: it represents a certain relation between the self and the world, bringing forth a type of objectivity opposed to the actuality of Hegelian Science. It is thus at Berlin, when his thought has attained almost universal acceptance, that Hegel becomes aware of a discourse that stands opposed to his fully developed notion of systematic truth. The strength of his polemical reaction can only be comprehended in relation to the danger that ironic discourse represents for the discourse of Science. Consequently, the danger that ironic discourse represents can only be understood through an adequate grasp of what constitutes the true objectivity and the objective truth of Hegel’s Scientific *logos*. It is my conviction that the examination of his critique of Schlegel allows us to discover the relation between discourse and objectivity in Hegel. Understanding this relation will help us comprehend the critique of the other key figures of Jena romanticism: Novalis and Schleiermacher.

Since many of the texts dealing with Schlegel refer to his role in the development of romantic irony, it might be tempting to begin with an analysis of this concept in order to then apply it to Schlegel—in other words, to understand the Hegelian critique of the thinker based on the critique of his concept. On the contrary, it seems to me that the most productive way to examine the Hegelian grasp of romantic irony is to begin with the critique that personally targets its inventor. Schlegel’s irony is specific to him in that it is distinctive with regard to the other expressions that Hegel finds in Novalis and in Schleiermacher. This specificity is rooted in the personality itself of Schlegel, in his individuality, and it is only with respect to the character traits that Hegel finds represented in his adversary’s discourse that his particular ironic expression becomes evident. Similarly, it is only through the particular individualities of Novalis and Schleiermacher that their particular ironic expressions can be understood. As I mentioned in the Introduction, this method is based on the fact that according to Hegel, the *content* of ironic discourse is nothing other than the subjective individual himself.

It is therefore from a detailed Hegelian portrait of Schlegel’s character traits, as an ironic individual, that we may comprehend the particular expression of

irony that Hegel attributes to him, allowing us insight into how romantic irony constitutes a discourse inimical to Scientific *logos*. Consequently, the personal traits examined in this chapter, through Hegel's references—namely Schlegel's dominating, seducing, sophistical personality, his pretentious claims to artistic virtuosity, and his vanity, consuming rapacity, and self-satisfaction are all of more general interest insofar as they imply a special relation between the individual self and the world, one Hegel sees as particular to irony.

## Sophistry and seduction

### Mastery and worldly wisdom

In Hegel's first epistolary references to Schlegel, we already find particular character traits associated with his ironic individuality, and along with them, a particular relation to the world.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the description of Schlegel as the leader of "people of his ilk," of "homeless riffraff" who represent an insult to Protestant common sense and bourgeois decency,<sup>12</sup> indicates a certain demagogical relationship with others that Hegel describes in terms of seduction and mastery. Schlegel is the seducer who masters or dominates *his* public. These same elements are found in Hegel's above-quoted letter to von Raumer, where Schlegel is directly associated with two examples of an "intensive" way of philosophizing—namely Brown's system of medicine, "which can be fully grasped in a half an hour," and the publications of Franz von Baader,<sup>13</sup> who "has printed, from time to time, a page or two which are supposed to contain the essence of his entire philosophy." This is the same context where Schlegel is presented as having "got through his lecture course in just six weeks," at Jena. Such a formal<sup>14</sup> approach to philosophy is indicative of a will to seduce the public by claiming a spurious mastery of knowledge: "He who only publishes in this way has the advantage in the sense that the public believes that he also masters the development of such universal thoughts."<sup>15</sup>

There are, in fact, two meanings of "mastery" at play, presented in German as *Meisterschaft* (mastering knowledge) and *Herrschaft* (mastering/dominating the crowd). Both meanings are involved when it comes to Schlegel, as found in the first non-epistolary reference to him in a Hegel text: the addition to paragraph 140 in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*, where we find a compact critique of irony. In this context, the dominating mastery of Schlegel's selfhood is directly linked to Fichte's absolute I.<sup>16</sup>

Now this form of subjectivism is irony[...] This attitude is really a product of Fichte's philosophy, according to which the I is absolute, i.e. the absolute certainty, the universal selfhood that accedes to objectivity through a course of further development. Of Fichte himself, it cannot properly be said that he made arbitrary selfhood into a moral principle, but, later on, this particularity itself, in the sense of the particular selfhood of Friedrich von Schlegel, regarding the good and the beautiful, has been presented as God. As a result, the objective good becomes only the fabrication [*Gebilde*] of my conviction, only gaining consistency through me, and which, as lord and master [*Herr und Meister*], I can make appear or disappear at will. If I am faced with something objective, it vanishes at the same moment before my eyes, and so I float over a boundless open space, calling up shapes and destroying them.

It might be tempting to try simply to explain, as Hegel appears to do, the figure that Schlegel represents by claiming that he only (mis)applied the Fichtean universal I = I to the area of particular subjectivity in order to come up with irony. There is no doubt that the Fichtean model of the self-positing I forms an essential element in the Hegelian representation of Schlegel's irony.<sup>17</sup> However, it remains to be seen how this model lends itself so well to the way in which Hegel conceives of irony. As we will see further on, Hegel "understood" the form of irony he associates with Schlegel before recognizing the Fichtean model in it.<sup>18</sup>

I will return to the question of the Fichtean model of the I = I when I discuss ironic esthetics. In the present context, what the reference to the absolute I of Fichte's philosophy reveals is the relation between that particular selfhood (*Ichkeit*) which has elevated itself to "lord and master," even to God, and objectivity. Indeed, objective reality seems only to be substantial in that it is there *for* the particular self. As we saw in the lengthy passage quoted above, from the *Philosophy of Right*, "If I am faced with something objective, it vanishes at the same moment before my eyes, and so I float over a boundless open space, calling up shapes and destroying them." The Schlegelian self is lord and master in that he holds the power to call up and destroy all objectivity. This *Herrschaft* and this *Meisterschaft* over the world is reflected in the evocative image of the "I" that "floats over" the immense space that it determines. Schlegel's ironic "I" can be seen as dominating its material, from which it draws forth the shapes that it will then destroy. This image of great height, of *hauteur*, in the French sense of aloofness, found here in the image of floating above, takes on other expressions elsewhere, for example the image of a summit (*Gipfel*) or a peak (*Spitze*) upon which Schlegel has purportedly hoisted himself. Along with its background of domination, the images of height conjure up references to

solitude, vertigo, purity, and, most significantly with regard to objectivity, to distance from the ground. The perspective of particular, dominating selfhood, “the peak of subjectivity who knows itself as the Ultimate”<sup>19</sup> cannot but flatten out the world as seen from above, emptying it of substance, in order to make it into something that I may do with as I please. For, “I am the master of the law and the all that matters.”<sup>20</sup>

Such a vision of flattened out objectivity is clearly opposed to what Hegel presents as objective truth (or true objectivity), namely “the ethical content of the rights, duties, and laws [...]” This opposition provides, as we will see, the key to Hegel’s comprehension of romantic irony: true objective content is evacuated or emptied through “the subjective vanity that consists in knowing itself as the vanity of all content and knowing itself, in this knowledge, as the absolute.”<sup>21</sup>

It is significant that Hegel presents the relation that dominating subjectivity maintains with the world as part of the sophistical tradition, even though the modern version must also involve the particular “I,” with its absolute pretensions. The reference to sophistry nonetheless helps situate romantic irony within a long tradition, one in which the sophists have been perceived to be in constant opposition to philosophy and truth. Because Hegelian Science posits a truth that is objectively substantial, however, a sophistical relation to truth must also have worldly repercussions. A sophistical approach to the world, as opposed to the world of Science, takes the form of the “worldly wisdom” (*Weltweisheit*) that Hegel attributes to the dominating subjectivity of Schlegel.

In his lengthy preface to Hinrichs’s work on religion,<sup>22</sup> Hegel refers explicitly to Schlegel as a contemporary avatar of the sophistical school, who challenges both the objectivity of truth and the truth of objectivity. Indeed, the “worldly wisdom” represented by Schlegel cannot but refer to a false world with regard to the one implied by Hegelian Science, i.e. the world constituted by the “ethical content of rights, duties and laws [...]” as described in the passage above, from the *Philosophy of Right*. I invite the reader to consider the following passage from Hegel’s preface to Hinrichs’s work on religion. The length of the quote is hopefully justified by the preface’s marginal status in Hegel studies, as well as its distinctive clarity and polemical tone.

The malady of our time [...], the contingency, the arbitrary will of subjective feeling and its opining, combined with the culture of reflection which claims that spirit is incapable of the knowledge of the truth, has since ancient times been called “sophistry” [*Sophisterei*]. It is what deserves the nick-name which Mr. Friedrich von Schlegel has recently unearthed afresh, “worldly wisdom” [*Weltweisheit*]<sup>23</sup>; for it is a wisdom in and of what is usually called the world, a

wisdom which concerns the contingent, the untrue and the temporal. It is the vanity which elevates the vain, the contingency of feeling, and the inclination of opining, to serve as the absolute principle of what is to count as law and duty, belief and truth. One must indeed often hear these sophistical presentations called “philosophy”; [...] Philosophy has forever fought against Sophistics [*Sophistik*], which can borrow from philosophy only the formal weapon, the culture of reflection, but has nothing in common with it as far as content is concerned; for it is precisely this: to flee from all objectivity of truth.<sup>24</sup>

The term “Sophisterei” is aimed at Schlegel, through the idea of “worldly wisdom,” and refers back to ancient Sophistics. The tendency to opine, to give one’s opinions (*Meinen*), and the claim that spirit is incapable of knowing truth appear as attributes “linked” to the culture of reflection, in other words, to the culture of the understanding (*Verstand*). This is the culture of “our time” and forms nothing other than what has always been called “sophistry.”

According to Hegel, sophistry represents a recalcitrant element, one that holds contradictory moments separate and fixated outside the spiritual movement of Science. In more conceptual language still, we might say that sophistry removes the dissolving action of the being-for-another of things in order to maintain them in their being-for-self. In this way, sophistry interrupts progress toward conceptual reconciliation. This is also how sophistry appears in the Perception chapter of the *Phenomenology*:

The sophistry of perception seeks to save the moments [of being-for-self and being-for-another] from their contradiction and to hold them firmly separated by the distinction between points of view [...].<sup>25</sup>

The separating power of sophistry is that of the understanding, of the culture of reflection and opinion specific to the exclusive operation of the understanding. This *Meinen* is nothing but particular subjectivity (thus the play on words between *mein* and *Meinen*, between “mine” and “opinions”) positing itself in judgments (*Urteile*), and then, through hypocrisy, taking its judgments for objective reality.<sup>26</sup>

The other sophistical element that comes to light in the Preface from Hinrichs’s work on religion stems from the assertion that spirit (here, perhaps better thought of as “mind”) is “incapable of knowing the truth.”<sup>27</sup> This skeptical moment can also be found in the above-quoted passage from the *Phenomenology*, where skepticism appears as a danger that threatens empirical consciousness: “It does indeed suspect their [i.e. empirical determinations] inessentiality; to save them from the danger that threatens them, it resorts to sophistry.”<sup>28</sup> In

other words, the “truth” of perceptual data reveals itself to be always vulnerable to skepticism, to the radical doubt that presents itself against such data as an annihilating force. Sophistry interjects itself here as the recalcitrant, separating power of the understanding, between the two opposing poles, i.e. between the perception of empirical reality and the skepticism that constantly threatens it. When skepticism triumphs over sophistry, it is empirical objectivity itself that is at stake and which is thoroughly vanquished.

In this vein, another text from the *Phenomenology* that evokes sophistry can be found within a passage on skepticism. Here, skepticism triumphs over sophistry and brings about the disappearance of its world:

The [skeptical] self-consciousness allows to disappear not only the objectivity of things [*das Gegenständliche*] as such but also its own relation to this objectivity, whereby it is valued and valorized as objectivity; it thus allows to disappear its perceiving, as well as its way of consolidating that which it is in danger of losing, namely sophistry and the truth which it determines and stabilizes.<sup>29</sup>

Skeptical self-consciousness that triumphs over sophistry cuts itself off from objectivity, which has become devoid of truth, in order to take refuge in itself, in the I = I conceived as simple self-identity. This purely egoistic identity expresses nothing other than the negativity or the abstract freedom that forms the very heart of the particular self. It is against this “self-conscious negation,” by which “self-consciousness acquires for itself the certainty of its own freedom,” that sophistry works, in an effort to maintain its own chimerical world. Within the movement of the concept, this recalcitrant moment of sophistry is but transitory, and it collapses into skepticism, which represents the truth of sophistry itself. In other words, skeptical self-consciousness is only the realization of sophistical self-certainty, the pure freedom it accords itself to posit itself as true reality (I = I), and this at the expense of any objective reality.

To summarize, sophistry, a recalcitrant, divisive power of the understanding (*Verstand*), in its opinionating hypocrisy, seeks to preserve its world of empirical objectivity from the radical skepticism that constantly threatens it. This world is precisely that of the *Weltweisheit*, of the worldly wisdom that is referred to in the Preface to Hinrichs’s work. This is a world of empirical finite things, a world “of the contingent, the untrue, of the temporal,” i.e. ultimately, “what is usually called the world.” In this context, we are able to see the relation between “*Sophisterei*” and the ancient schools of sophistry: in both cases we might say that “man is the measure of all things.” The world of sophistry, according to Hegel, is reduced to the untrue phenomenal multiplicity of finitude. The things of the world are only



there for the sophist, who can handle, manipulate, consume, and destroy them at whim. Such objectivity has no substantial truth.

### Sophistry and bestiality

The things of which man is the sole measure are thoroughly arbitrary. The sophist proves to be dominating insofar as he determines “all things,” including other people, without allowing himself to be determined by them; he remains fixed in his being-for-itself, without allowing himself to be mitigated by the for-another. Hence the bad reputation of the ancient sophists— namely that they “amassed great riches; they were boastful, they travelled all over Greece, they sometimes lived extravagantly.”<sup>30</sup> These are “men of the world” who know how to manipulate and enjoy the world. *Weltweisheit* (worldly wisdom), which implies both meanings of the English term “worldly,” is not limited by the domination carried out on the empirically determined world, at the hands of the ratiocinating thought of the *Verstand*. To this aspect, *Sophisterei* (sophistry) adds the practical (i.e. moral) dimension of the particular will. *Sophisterei* reduces the surrounding world to the objects of its will, to the things of which it is the measure.

The dominating and consuming aspect of *Sophisterei*, as well as the type of world that it implies, are clearly portrayed in a passage from Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where the Greek sophist’s appetite degenerates into a Roman orgy, characterized by the despot, a person living entirely for-himself, reigning over an infinity of other individualities, equally for-themselves.

This is the reality of the Greek sophists; man is the measure of all things,<sup>31</sup> i.e. man, according to his immediate will, his desire, his ends, his interests, his feelings. This way of thinking one’s self can be seen in the Roman religion and world, promoted to the status of being, of consciousness of the world, wherein we witness the complete disappearance of all beautiful and ethical life, a breaking down into finite things of desire, ends and interests,—it is a momentary enjoyment, it is pleasure, a reign of the human animal [...] What maintains unity is only the immeasurable power of the despot, of the unique individual [...] He is the One, the real, actual god, individual will as power [*Willens als Macht*] over other individualities of infinite number.<sup>32</sup>

The relation to a world that is infinitely determinable and consumable can only be “animal” since this relation is reducible to the satisfaction of hunger, in momentary enjoyment. The truth of such a world is its nullity, in a way that only radical skepticism can grasp. But it is precisely the consciousness of this nullity that sophistry holds at a distance, in order to thus prolong its feasting. In a world

of this sort, the sole difference between the despot and the other subjectivities is the degree of particular will at stake. He who has the most will enjoys the most power. However, as indicated by the Eleatic reference in the above passage, the despotic singularity is not structurally different from the other individualities. In fact, the existence of the One actually necessitates the existence of a world made up of other “ones,” and vice versa. This state of affairs is only possible in an “animal reign,” where “man is the measure of all things, i.e. man according to his immediate will, his desire, his ends, his interests, his feelings.”<sup>33</sup>

Hypocrisy, as Hegel attributes it to Schlegel in the addition to paragraph 140 of the *Philosophy of Right*, is complicit in the action of sophistry because what hypocrisy allows us to forget is the fact that the world maintained by sophistical understanding is the very creation of that understanding. More precisely, it is the understanding’s own action that projects, through the instantiation of its Kantian categories, the phenomenal world in which this hypocritical consciousness lives, and which appears to it as an infinite variety of determinable and consumable objects. However, becoming aware of this fact would already imply a fall into skepticism, where these objects would no longer appear real.

Hence, it is in reference to Kant that we discover a model for the opinionating dimension of *Sophisterei*; this is the dimension that is added to ancient sophistry (which *presupposed* an untrue, phenomenal world) in order to form modern *Sophisterei* (which *poses* or *projects* an untrue, phenomenal world).<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the two expressions have this in common: the fact of “fleeing any objectivity of the truth.”<sup>35</sup> In the pre-Kantian sophistical consciousness, the world consists of an infinite diversity of untrue phenomena. The same is true of the Kantian model, with this difference: it is now the particular subject that determines, that posits, *through the very act of judgment*, the world as that untrue dispersion.

Particular subjectivity, defined as pure freedom or negativity, i.e. as the infinite, subjective, individual power to determine and *judge*, has not, in Hegel’s eyes, existed conceptually before Kant, and it is precisely this form that makes possible the malady of modern times: the power of the understanding, linked to particular selfhood, producing an infinite form that judges and determines, according to its desires, a world that it itself may render untrue, while being sufficiently hypocritical to forget that such substantial untruth is the fruit of its own determinations. The hypocrisy of the modern era, consisting, above all, in duping oneself, is based on the bad faith of the Kantian understanding, which may find the world of empirical finitude to be to its taste but claims not to know that such a world is merely the fruit of its own categories.

As I wrote above, Schlegel's *Sophisterei* allows us to consider how he stands in relation to Hegelian Science. Indeed, just as the philosophical tradition has always felt obliged to take into account and overcome sophistry, which represents a permanent challenge, Hegel, as the recapitulation of philosophical tradition, cannot but take into account romantic irony as personified by Schlegel. Thus, the Hegelian endeavor, confronted with Jena Romanticism, consists in attempting to overcome it by making it a moment of his systematic notion of Science. "Making it a moment" means *Aufheben*, negating and conserving it as a chapter within the Hegelian oeuvre. However, the fact that Hegel seems to feel obliged to constantly reiterate his critique of ironic romanticism, in increasingly polemical fashion until the end of his life, seems to confirm that he felt he was dealing with a type of thinking radically opposed to philosophical *logos*, and which does not allow itself to be easily overcome. In this case, one might wonder if, as with sophistry in its relation to philosophical tradition, ironic romanticism does not represent a persistent and indomitable trouble for Hegelian Science.

In any case, it seems that for Hegel the *Sophisterei* of contemporary romantic irony represents something truly "bad" and which goes beyond the malaise posed by basic sophistry. In other words, there appears to be something purely natural, even animal or bestial, that attaches itself to this modern brand of hypocrisy. To quote from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, "*Sophisterei* is thus despicable insofar as we see in it a particularity of which only bad men may be guilty."<sup>36</sup> Schlegel, whom we have seen linked to the figure of "evil" in the *Phenomenology*, and who appears in the context of a discussion of moral evil in paragraph 140 of the *Philosophy of Right*, is "bad," not because he espouses or gives birth to a theory of irony but rather because his particular individuality *itself* is embodied in irony, in the form of *Sophisterei*. The bestiality of this form cannot but express itself in his work, particularly in *Lucinde*, that first postmodern novel, which claims to raise sexual enjoyment to an expression of metaphysical transcendence.

### Sophistry of the seducer

Modern *Sophisterei* shares with the ancient Sophists a certain vision of the world: a multiplicity of contingent, finite empirical entities, i.e. an objectivity devoid of substantial truth. Such a world vision is constantly in danger of collapsing into an underlying skepticism, which is merely the truth of the empty empirical reality. However, modern *Sophisterei* adds the bestial character of the rapacious, sybaritic consumer. It is therefore not surprising that the ironic individual who

authored *Lucinde* should appear, in Hegel, in the context of sexual seduction. In the Addition to paragraph 164 of the *Philosophy of Right*, regarding the contractual aspects of marriage, we find the following:

Friedrich von Schlegel, in his *Lucinde*, and a follower of his (Schleiermacher), in his anonymous *Letters* (Lübeck and Leipzig, 1800), have promoted the view that the wedding ceremony is superfluous, and is a formality that can be dispensed with because love is all that matters and the ceremony detracts from its value. Surrendering to sensuality is thus presented as necessary in order to prove the freedom and depth of love, an argumentation [*Argumentation*] not unfamiliar to seducers.<sup>37</sup>

The relation to sophistry is directly, if marginally, established in the text, for written in the margins of the manuscript of the Addition, Hegel adds: “Sophisterei—Als Beweis—verlangt—Liebe glaubt—geistiges Bewusstsein—Mädchen gibt ihre Ehre auf, Mann nicht[...] *Lucinde*.”<sup>38</sup> The seducer uses a sophistical argumentation in order to demand that the girl prove the freedom and depth of her love by giving herself to him sexually. In this act of seduction, we find what qualifies as *Sophisterei*: sophistry as an argumentation employing the arms of understanding (*Verstand*) and its dominating aspect, linked to a bad form of particular subjectivity that is out to gain what it desires. It is this particular desire that “raises” such argumentation to the level of *Sophisterei*. We have seen how Schlegel, through his novel, is already associated with “the bad” in the *Phenomenology* and later in the *Philosophy of Right*. I have also related this badness to hypocrisy and to *Sophisterei* and, above all, to a certain grasp of objectivity. In that *Sophisterei* implies both desire and argumentation, it is perfectly suited to sexual seduction. It is in this sense that Schlegel, the author and, we might say, the *actor* of *Lucinde*, represents, for Hegel, a paradigmatic expression of sexual desire and seduction.<sup>39</sup> I do not believe it is possible to fully apprehend the strength and tone of Hegel’s polemical attitude toward Schlegel, and, in fact, we cannot comprehend the general sense of Hegel’s critique, without grasping the sense of scandal that he must have felt when confronted with this fragmentary novel that seems to promote free sexual love, going as far as to fantasize “dithyrambically” on “The Most Beautiful Situation.”<sup>40</sup> In Hegel’s eyes, Schlegel remains forever perverse, never dissociated from the scandalous nature of his youthful, ironic take on the novel.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to recall that the desire (*Begierde*) experienced by the particular subject is a desire *for* finitude and *in* finitude. In fact, regarding the structure of desire, it is more appropriate to speak of the subject in its singularity,

facing another singularity. It is only through the process itself of desire in its inter-subjective dimension that the singular subject for-itself will particularize itself for-another. However, before the subject recognizes itself in the object of its desire, this object remains determined as a purely natural singularity devoid of selfhood and presenting no resistance at all to the destructive desire of the subject. The desired object is only there to the extent that it is to be annulled, consumed. Thus, the particular subject's desire proves to be selfish, destructive, and ultimately futile in that it is always destined to be reawakened. As Hegel writes on desire in the *Philosophy of Spirit's* "Phenomenology" section:

Because the object (*Objekt*) is in-itself and for self-consciousness that which is deprived of selfhood, it can oppose no resistance to this activity; [Self-consciousness] behaves only negatively to the object devoid of selfhood, which is consequently merely consumed. In general, desire is thus, in its satisfaction, destructive, as it is, according to its content, selfish; since satisfaction is only given in the singular and fleetingly, in satisfaction desire arises once again.<sup>42</sup>

At the level of self-consciousness, as presented in Hegel's phenomenological accounts, desire takes up the same dialectic previously found in perception, at the level of consciousness. For the perceptive understanding (e.g. as presented in Hume and Kant), the object has no reality in itself but is simply represented as an externally derived phenomenon. Similarly, in desire the immediate, external object has no true reality; it is rather,

nothingness facing the subject, something that only appears to be self-subsisting, and in fact, is such that it neither deserves nor has the ability to endure but must [necessarily] fall when confronted with the real power of the subject.<sup>43</sup>

Within this "real power," we rediscover the "will as power" of the desiring self, which was brought to light above, with regard to *Sophisterei*. Such a will is bad insofar as it is an arbitrary and particular will standing over against the universal will, conceived as the will of other individuals. Politically, the opposition to the universal will can be thought of as a fixation within a particular will that is *for-itself*, and fails to recognize the objective and general good. The inwardness of the particular will seizes objectivity in its natural finitude and only relates to it through what is natural in its own self, namely desire. The desiring subject is a form of pure inwardness facing an objective content that is untrue, as is the case with the objective content targeted by the subject of perception. In both cases, natural objectivity is reduced to the objects of consumption.

We say that these desires, these penchants, etc. can be good or bad. But, as the will takes them in the determination of contingency that they have as

natural[...] the will is thus opposed to universality, considered as something inherently objective or as the Good. The Good [...] forms the extreme opposite of immediate objectivity or that which is simply natural. It is in this way that this inwardness of the will is bad.<sup>44</sup>

The objectivity at stake is *immediate*, to the extent that it has not been invested with selfhood or, to put it more speculatively, the I has not reflected itself into objectivity as subjectivity. In still other words, the I does not recognize the I-ness of immediate objectivity and it is precisely this lack of recognition that characterizes the relation between the desiring subject and the object of desire, and which Hegel finds in the relations of seduction described in Schlegel's *Lucinde*. For recognizing oneself in the object of desire brings about a dialectic of recognition wherein the *particular* desiring self (and it is, in fact, only from here on that we can speak of particularity) can get beyond the immediately singular relation to objectivity and, through the particularity of the other, attain the universality of ethical substance. For Hegel, it is within such ethical substance that the true sense of marriage is found, whereby it is not merely an empty formality. When Hegel accuses the author of *Lucinde*, i.e. the seducer, of making the girl believe that marriage is only a vain convention<sup>45</sup> (as we saw in the above-quoted passage from the *Philosophy of Right*), he is not merely defending a conventional moral view of marriage. He is accusing Schlegel of denying the objectivity of truth, or, what is the same, the truth of objectivity.

The truth of objectivity is ultimately based on the Idea expressing itself in the institutions of church and state. The rituals, art, and doctrine of the former and the laws of the latter, as they are actually lived and subscribed to, are concrete expressions of freedom as a human affair (*Sache*). On the other hand, desire implies the radical separation that generally characterizes the relationship between the self and nature, in Hegel, to the extent that desire involves an immediate take on objectivity. It may seem contradictory to speak of immediacy in the relation between the desiring self and the object of desire, while at the same time positing a radical separation between the two. However, this contradiction is at the very heart of desire. It explains why, in desire, one feels the object to be both present and distant at the same time. It is why, in natural or animal satisfaction, desire is always about to be reawakened.

Already in his *System of Ethical Life* (1802), Hegel claims that erotic desire belongs "to nature and not to ethical life," for in such desire, "one is determined as subjective, the other as objective."<sup>46</sup> Overcoming erotic separation happens through the birth of the child and the mediation effectuated through its education; the child is thus a subjective objectivity where "desire is suppressed along with its

corresponding need.”<sup>47</sup> The suppression of desire is a requirement of spirit insofar as it is conceived as a process of the suppression/mediation of nature or, in other words, as a process of the suppression/mediation of the subject-object division. For Hegel, marital union represents an abrogating of sexual desire, to the extent that love is displaced onto the child, and thus desexualized. However, even beyond the parent-child relation, marriage itself implies a union that, by its legal character, rises above the natural domain to attain the ethical sphere, where sexual desire appears to lose its right of residence, at least within the particular married couple.

In the poem that Hegel writes to his fiancée on April 13, 1811, marriage is presented as a sacrifice where “earthly nature” is purified by the flames of spirit. In this poem, we also find the passage, “Mich zu Dir, zu mir Dich zu erweitern, Geh in Feu’r, was uns vereinzelt, auf!”<sup>48</sup> What maintains us in singularity, “what isolates us,” is precisely desire. More prosaically, in a letter from that same summer, Hegel tries to explain to his future wife why his preceding letter seemed lacking in conjugal passion:

But what I have always told you seems to me like a result: marriage is essentially a religious bond; love needs, to be completed, something more elevated than what is simply in itself and by itself. Complete satisfaction, what we call ‘being happy’, is only accomplished thanks to religion and the feeling of duty, for only in them are set aside all the particularities of the temporal self[...]”<sup>49</sup>

Besides the relations between parents and children, and those between husband and wife, a third example of pure love, without desire, can be found between brother and sister, where, as Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*, “they do not desire one another, do not give themselves to one another or have not received from one another that being-for-self, but they are for each other free individualities.”<sup>50</sup> The sister remains devoted to her irreplaceable brother, in a relationship that reminds us of the one between Hegel and his own sister Christiane or the bond between Antigone and Polynices.

We are very far removed indeed from the “most beautiful situation” that Schlegel presents in his *Lucinde*.

## Pretensions of the artistic “Virtuoso”

### The Absolute I = I

Throughout this work we see how, for Hegel, romantic irony represents a threat to true objectivity (or to objective truth) precisely because irony attacks, with its

critical judgments, the highest expressions of absolute spirit: art, religion, and philosophy. To the extent that romantic irony claims to develop a new theory of art, which overflows the banks of artistic practice and inundates the religious and philosophical fields, Hegel must deal with irony in his *Lectures on Esthetics*, the place where his own grasp of esthetic activity is revealed in all its spiritual breadth.

In what is generally recognized as the “introduction” to these *Lectures*, edited and published by Hotho in 1835 and 1842, we find a central text regarding Hegel’s critique of Early German Romanticism.<sup>51</sup> Here, the model of the Fichtean  $I = I$ , far from constituting an original inspiration for Schlegel, is presented rather as a resource where Schlegel found a “deeper justification” [*Grund*]<sup>52</sup> for his previously developed idea. Hence, I believe that in the *Esthetics*, as elsewhere, reference to Fichte may serve as a hermeneutical key, bringing to light dimensions of Schlegel’s ironic personality as Hegel conceives it, but only on the condition that we go beyond this reference and discover a more fundamental Kantian element.

In the *Lectures on Esthetics*, Friedrich Schlegel first appears together with his brother August Wilhelm. Hegel’s attitude toward the latter is generally respectful, for example when referring to his translation of Shakespeare. Before bringing up irony, where August Wilhelm is no longer discussed and the tone becomes openly polemical, Hegel praises the “audacity” with which the two brothers threw themselves into “a brilliant debate against the current way of seeing things, and introduced into several branches of art a new criterion for judging and higher points of view than those they were fighting against.”<sup>53</sup> Hegel also acknowledges an “obvious merit in unearthing and studying, with love, past works that [the Schlegels’] time considered with disdain, such as the Italian and Dutch traditions, the *Nibelungen*, etc., or those completely unknown, like Hindu poetry and mythology.”<sup>54</sup> However, continues Hegel, “they were wrong in attributing an exaggerated value to these works.” This mistake stems from the fact that the Schlegels “were rather weak philosophically.” In other words, “neither one nor the other could claim to have a vocation for speculative thought.”<sup>55</sup> Their more critical than philosophical natures brought them near the point of view of the Idea while at the same time disqualified them from this point of view. Thus, “they have taken from the Idea just what their natures, less philosophical than critical, were capable of assimilating.”<sup>56</sup> Since their new criterion of judgment was not based on philosophical/speculative knowledge, their judgments lacked substance, erring “sometimes by lack, sometimes by excess.” This “lack of judgment” in



the Schlegels' judgments is what led them to attribute "an exaggerated value" to such works as Holberg's comedies, which are only "mediocre."<sup>57</sup>

Having introduced these considerations on esthetic judgment, Hegel is now ready to address the question of irony.

It is from this trend and above all from the ideas and doctrines of F. von Schlegel that the various forms of irony have been developed. According to one of its sides, irony has found a deeper justification in Fichte's philosophy, insofar as the principles of this philosophy have been applied to art.<sup>58</sup>

Schlegel's doctrines, having engendered irony, are immediately related to Fichte's philosophy.<sup>59</sup> However, Hegel begins by positing a limitation to this reference by using the expression "one of its sides." A further qualifying limitation appears a sentence below:

Now, concerning the closer links between the Fichtean propositions and one of the trends in irony, we need only remark upon the point that Fichte established the I, the thoroughly abstract and formal I, as the absolute principle of all knowing, of all reason, of all knowledge.<sup>60</sup>

Here, the expression "one of the trends in irony"<sup>61</sup> again limits the reach of the Fichtean model regarding irony. Such qualifications lead me to believe that the Fichtean model does not exhaust all the meaning of Hegel's reading of Schlegel's irony and, as well, that there are several expressions of irony, which are not all reducible to the Fichtean model. Allow me to quote the remainder of this crucial text.

The I is further conceived as a simple thing in itself, on one hand bringing about the negation of all particularity, of all determination, all content (for all things that matter [*Sache*] are swallowed up in this abstract freedom and unity), on the other hand, all content only has value for the I insofar as it is posited and sanctioned by it. All that is, exists only through the I, and all that exists through me, I can just as easily destroy [*vernichten*].<sup>62</sup>

The Fichtean model is applied to Schlegel in terms of negativity and reflection: the pure I, in-itself and self-identical, as the abstract freedom that brings about, "on one hand... the negation of all particularity, of all determination," of all objectivity, and, "on the other hand," posits itself as objectivity. Because all objective content comes out of this I, content only has value (*gelten soll*) in that it is "posited and sanctioned" by the I. However, once posited, "all that exists through me, I can just as easily destroy." Besides the positive aspect of reflection, there are consequently two instances of negation: the primordial

one, understood as pure subjectivity annihilating *all* objectivity and the other, related to the act of judging, that destroys or rips apart that objectivity which reflection has itself posited. But just how Fichtean are these two expressions of negativity?

In fact, the first negating aspect, related to the negativity of the pure I, is perhaps best expressed in another context, where Hegel writes, “The I is thus a kind of fiery crucible in which indifferent diversity is consumed and reduced to the unity,”<sup>63</sup> a reference more suited to the synthesizing action of Kantian subjective apperception. The other negating aspect can also perhaps be better understood with reference to what Kant means by determinant judgment, where particular cases *fall* under the general. So why then choose the Fichtean model if, in both aspects—i.e. where the I is a “fiery crucible” in which objectivity is consumed, and again where the I is the self that judges—it seems that a Kantian model is appropriate?

A first answer might be that Hegel had simply noticed that Schlegel seemed, in his writings, to have moved through a Fichtean stage before leaving it behind, while still maintaining traces of that thought. Indeed, adopting the self-positing I as the perfect model to describe the act of artistic creation was very much in tune with the tastes and demands of the time. Hegel acknowledges this when he states that “Schlegel and Schelling both accepted Fichte’s point of view as a starting point, Schelling, in order to go beyond it, Schlegel, in order to develop it in his own way and later to leave it behind.”<sup>64</sup> However, given young Schlegel’s actual path, the “historical” choice of a Fichtean starting point seems arbitrary.<sup>65</sup> It appears rather that something in Fichte’s “principles” specifically inflects Hegel’s way of comprehending Schlegel, something beyond the model of the Kantian subject, which can be said to posit a world by imposing its categories on it, in order to then destroy this world in the “fiery crucible” of subjective forms.

In fact, what the reflection of the Fichtean I = I evokes in Hegel is the notion of a self that claims to raise itself to the status of the Absolute, to a divine subjectivity, in the sense of a productive imagination, one that produces its own content. The fact that Fichte fails in this attempt is “demonstrated” by Hegel in his *Difference Between the Philosophical Systems of Fichte and Schelling*. However, in spite of his failures, Fichte’s attempt at systematicity goes beyond Kantian philosophy, where the possibilities of scientific knowledge and of morality are grounded in the postulate of the divine understanding and the good will. In Hegel’s Fichte, it is precisely the divine as a totality that is at stake, for, “I = I is the Absolute, the totality; nothing exists outside of the I.”<sup>66</sup>

However, the identity of subject and object that is the goal of Fichte's system (identity that is the aim of any system of idealism at the time of the *Differenzschrift*, when Hegel is still very much under the influence of Schelling) remains, according to Hegel, a subjective identity, i.e. a subjectivity that is still confronted with an objectivity either through theoretical reflection or through practical striving. In that the identity remains subjective, true objectivity remains continually beyond its grasp. This true, unknowable objectivity is what Hegel sees in Kant's thing-in-itself, as well as in Fichte's notion of the Not-I's resistance (*Anstoss*). What is presented to the subjective identity, in both cases, are phenomena, appearances (*Erscheinungen*), i.e. subjective representations and not actual things.

The nature of the resistance is accordingly something outside knowledge and the I is always something conditioned, which has something other confronting it. Consequently, Fichte, as well, remains stuck in the result of Kantian philosophy, i.e. the fact that nothing can be known other than the finite, while the infinite remains beyond thought. What is called the thing-in-itself is, in Fichte, the resistance [...] Moreover, the content that the I's activity brings to light is nothing other than the usual content of experience, except with the added fact that this content is merely a phenomenon.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, on the practical (moral) level, where the will and desire are brought to bear, what is a phenomenon on the theoretical level becomes a simple object of desire.

Here, in the second main part of the theory of subjective spirit, desire does not yet have any determination other than that of the impulse, to the extent that the latter, without having been determined by means of thought, is directed towards an external object in which it seeks to satisfy itself.<sup>68</sup>

The various tuggings of desire and their satisfactions cannot be imputed to Absolute Subjectivity as such, i.e. as divine selfhood. Rather, desire's implicit lack only manifests itself in particular subjectivity, in individual self-consciousness, i.e. there where we find the particular individuality of Friedrich Schlegel. In fact, this shift between Schlegel's "starting point" in the principles of Fichte's philosophy and their incarnation in the living individual that is Schlegel, as an ironic self-consciousness, seems to repeat a logic that Hegel already found implicit in those principles themselves. The difficulty that the Fichtean principle encounters in coming to terms with true objectivity, one that is more than a purely subjective reflection, reduces the principle to the level of particular subjectivity where judgments and desire only apply to an illusory objectivity that it has posited itself.

The particular tendencies that Hegel recognizes within the figure of the Fichtean I constitute a key element of ironic subjectivity in its esthetic judgments and artistic creations. Although it is true that, in general, “the self is an active, living individual, and its life consists in configuring its life for himself and for others [...]”<sup>69</sup> particular ironic subjectivity, as we find it in the individuality of Schlegel, preserves the traces of its Fichtean origin. The ironic self never loses its absolutist pretensions, according to which objectivity is nothing but appearance, emptied of all significance other than what the I, as master and lord, feels like conferring upon it.

As long as we hold onto these perfectly empty forms which have their origin in the absoluteness of the abstract I, nothing is considered as having intrinsic value in and for itself but only has that which is conferred by the subjectivity of the I. But if so, then the I becomes lord and master [*Herr und Meister*] over everything, and there is nothing, neither in the ethical realm nor in law, nor in the profane nor in the sacred that is not first posited by the I, and cannot similarly be annihilated by it. Thus, all that exists in and for itself is but appearance [*Schein*], being neither true nor real through itself and by itself but only having a mere appearance through the I, at whose free disposal and whim, and under whose power it remains. To allow it or to annihilate it depends entirely on the whims of the I, conceived as an absolute I.<sup>70</sup>

## Creating illusions

The Absolute/Divine quality that Hegel discovers in the principle of the I = I invests itself in an absolute individuality, taking on, in profane terms, the figures of the Roman Emperor or Robespierre, and, in the realm of the sacred, the figure of the monotheistic God. The power of this absolute I is found in its absolute although abstract freedom to destroy. However, we must not forget that what is destroyed is nothing other than what the absolute I has “first posited”: “all that exists by the I can equally be destroyed by the I.”<sup>71</sup>

Above, I stated that the destructive aspect of the absolute I seems to refer more to the “fiery crucible” of the Kantian understanding than to the Fichtean I. Indeed, in the chapter on Fichte in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the frankly destructive aspect of the I is missing, where the issue is theoretical consciousness. There, the Not-I is conceived in terms of a limiting condition of the I, which is a determination. “There is also a negative in this determining,” Hegel tells us, and there is also suppression insofar as, “to the suppression of a limit, another one always appears; it is the process of an alternating between

negation and affirmation.”<sup>72</sup> However, this theoretical activity seems far removed from the “destruction (*Vernichten*)” associated with the ironic subject.<sup>73</sup>

When, in the practical sphere, Fichte takes the I as positing itself against the Not-I, understood as nature, Hegel once more finds a certain negating aspect. However, what is again “suppressed” is simply the limitation (here, expressed as the opposition) between the I and its Not-I.

The I is the activity, the causality, that which posits the Not-I and that which suppresses its opposition. But just as with Kant [where] sensibility and reason remain opposed, we have here the same opposition, merely in a more abstract form and not in the grossly empirical form of Kant.

It is precisely this “grossly empirical form” of Kantian understanding, i.e. the model of a subjectivity that destroys its own representations in the “fiery crucible” of its synthetic unity, which is better suited to the idea of a dominating power, destructive of the phenomenal world, better suited than the “more abstract form” of that gentler “negativity” that Hegel attributes to the Fichtean  $I = I$ . It seems therefore evident that the subjectivity of the ironic individuality attributed to Schlegel cannot be exclusively based on Fichte, but that the model of the  $I = I$  must be complemented by the notion of Kantian subjectivity, which Hegel apprehends as an empty, avid form of negativity directed toward an illusory world that is generated by subjective categories.

In fact, the question of how Hegel perceives the theoretical underpinnings of romantic irony is better understood with reference to the *objectivity* of the “phenomena” of subjective idealism as a whole (both Kant and Fichte). In the above-quoted passage from the *Lectures on Esthetics*, it is the term “appearance” (*Schein*) and not “phenomenon” (*Erscheinung*) that is used. The distinction that Hegel makes between the two terms helps us better see the nature of the objectivity at stake when ironic subjectivity is apprehended with reference to its sources in subjective idealism.<sup>74</sup>

At the beginning of the *Science of Logic*’s “Doctrine of Essence” there is a chapter on appearance as it is involved in Hegel’s thoughts on reflection and essence. The essence in question is the sense or meaning that we lend to objectivity or, in more speculative terms, the sense that being takes on in being determined by thought. This “sense,” which gradually becomes more objective as it passes through the “Doctrine of Essence,” is nothing other than the instantiation of the (subjective) Kantian categories, by which objectivity is *thought*, and which are revealed, at the end of the *Logic*, in all their (Aristotelian) actuality. However, at the level of appearance, this sense, these categories, are nothing other than pure, immediate,

non-objectified reflections. At this level of immediacy, we might say, there is no difference between reflection, essence, and appearance. "Appearance is the same thing as that which is reflection; but it is reflection as immediate; [...] essence is reflection."<sup>75</sup> What defines all these elements is the absence of existence, of being-there [*Dasein*]. Thus: "It is the immediacy of not-being that constitutes appearance."<sup>76</sup> "Appearance is this not-being-there."<sup>77</sup>

What Hegel means is that essence, at this level, remains occult and does not reside in existence. Essence is thought of as a thing-in-itself that remains behind appearances, a hidden sense or meaning. Appearance (*Schein*) itself is thus empty of meaning. On the contrary, the phenomenon (*Erscheinung*), as it is found in the second section of the "Doctrine of Essence," is essence posited as the ground (*Grund*) of an existence.<sup>78</sup> Here, the truth of the objective phenomenon, its sense, is manifest but only as a natural force expressed in the laws of physics, for example, in gravitation. For the phenomenon, essence is no longer occult but now manifest as a "raison d'être." On the other hand, appearance, which is deprived of existence (of *Dasein*) does not attain even this stage of objectivity, and the essence of this non-objectivity remains a thing-in-itself. The only possible essence here is therefore entirely subjective. In this way, appearance, insofar as it is essence (i.e. as the categories) that reflects itself immediately in itself is nothing other than the phenomenon *in the Kantian sense* of the term—i.e. an objectivity that is purely subjective, that only exists in subjective categories. The "phenomenon" of subjective idealism, Hegel is telling us, is but appearance, a conclusion that easily leads to skepticism.

Thus appearance is the phenomenon of skepticism or better yet the phenomenon of [subjective] idealism, an immediacy such that it is not something or a thing, absolutely not an independent being that would exist outside its determination and its relation to the subject.<sup>79</sup>

The phenomenon of subjective idealism, i.e. appearance, seems to present itself to the subject as "a given [and independent] content of perception"<sup>80</sup> in the case of Kant, or as an independent limit that is there to be suppressed, in the case of Fichte's practical philosophy. However, these data are nothing but the representations of subjectivity, "that arise in it like bubbles."<sup>81</sup>

Hence, concerning appearance, we are dealing with subjective idealism and the relation it establishes with objectivity, which really is not one, but rather consists of subjective representations or reflections. It is through the action of hypocritical sophistry that the subject takes its representations for immediately determinable data, devoid of any substantial or essential objectivity. In fact,

essence is something entirely attributed by the subject. Truly objective essence, the truth of objectivity, is removed elsewhere, in the thing-in-itself or in the Not-I's resistance, which, as we saw, are equivalent for Hegel. The immediate phenomena/appearances of subjective idealism only exist as given content that is there to be suppressed or destroyed, theoretically, in the "fiery crucible" of the understanding's forms or, practically, in the arbitrary whims of the desiring individual.

The *Meisterschaft* and *Herrschaft* of the romantic artist represent a power over the objective world (including other people) but only insofar as it is reduced to appearance, i.e. insofar as the ironic individual creates an illusory world made up of an infinite diversity of immediate things without consistency, the contents of his subjective understanding and will. In fact, the structures themselves of the understanding and the will that are implied by subjective idealism, according to Hegel, *necessarily* imply a world of determinable things over which the ironic subject reigns as lord and master. Indeed, the ironist creates and destroys at whim, and he behaves toward his world as a reigning artistic virtuoso.

Conversely, if the objects of the understanding or the will were *actually* subsisting in and for themselves, they could not be consumed or dissolved in the fiery crucible of subjective forms nor by the negativity of desire. Thus Hegel ironically remarks, "[...W]e have every reason to be happy that, regarding the things around us, we are merely dealing with appearances and not existences that are firm and subsisting in themselves, because if they were, we would immediately die of hunger, both physically and spiritually."<sup>82</sup>

### **Irony and lack of seriousness**

The absolute subjectivity of the I = I, for whom the world is only appearance that is posited and consumed, is embodied, along with the character traits of lordship and mastery, in the individuality of the ironic artist that is Schlegel. I want to quote the rest of the passage from the *Lectures on Esthetics*, which I introduced earlier. The length of the quote can be justified by its pertinence regarding the portrait that Hegel brushes of the ironic artist, but also by its clarity. Our examination of appearance (*Schein*) as the phenomenon of subjective idealism gives us access to this text where the ironic artist is presented in his relation to the world. This relation is defined in terms of "divine genius" and "virtuosity," over against their Hegelian counterweight: seriousness. The text is also crucial in that it puts ironic subjectivity (Schlegel) in relation with other selves. Through artistic expression,

the ironic subject who, at first, only exists for-itself must also appear and present itself "for others." However, as we will see further on, the work of the ironic artist of irony has for sole content his own subjective individuality. This lack of objective substantiality results in artistic failure with regard to the very public which he himself has, in a way, created. For the objectivity of *his* public will prove to be an illusory, dispersed and consumable feature of the reality posited by his ironic mastery of the world.

Now, in the third place,<sup>83</sup> the I is a living acting individual and his life consists in making his individuality for-himself as for others, in expressing himself and externalizing himself as a phenomenon. For each man, insofar as he lives, seeks to realize himself and does so. Regarding the beautiful and art, this can be understood as follows: living as an artist and configuring his life artistically. But according to this principle, I live artistically if all my actions, all my expressions, regardless of the content, remain for me only appearances and receive a form that remains completely under my power. The result of this is that I cannot take seriously either this content nor its expression and its execution. For true seriousness is only present through a substantial interest, a matter that has content in itself, the truth, the ethical substance [*Sittlichkeit*], etc., through a content that already has, for me, as such, an essential value, so that I become essential myself, to the extent that I have submerged myself in that content and become worthy of it in all my knowing and acting. According to the point of view where the artist is the all-positing and all-destroying [*auflösende*] I to whom no content [*Inhalt*], no consciousness appears as absolute and in-and-for-itself, but rather as a self-made, disposable appearance [*Schein*], no seriousness as such can take place since all validity is only ascribed to the formalism of the I. [...] And now this virtuosity of an ironic-artistic life can be grasped as a divine genius [*Genialität*] for whom everything and everyone is a creation without essence, in which the free creator, who knows himself to be loose and unattached from everything, is only involved to the extent he may equally destroy or create them. He who takes the standpoint of divine genius perceives other men from above, finding them stunted and flat, since law, ethical substance, etc. are still appreciated by them as something solid, constraining, essential. Thus the individual who lives as an artist maintains relations with others, lives with friends, lovers, etc., but as a genius, his relation to his determinate reality, to his particular actions, as to the universal in-and-for-itself, is nothing at all [*ein Nichtiges*], and he behaves ironically towards it.

This is the general sense of divine ironic genius. It is the concentration of the I in the I, for whom all bonds are broken and who can only live in the bliss of self-enjoyment. Sir Friedrich von Schlegel has invented this irony and many others prattled on about it then or have begun to prattle about it again these days.



Seriousness is already opposed to irony, to the extent that the latter can be seen as frivolousness. However, the deeper meaning of the opposition is this: irony represents an expression of unilateral individual subjectivity while seriousness occurs when that one-sidedness is overcome in the tragic involvement with its opposite. Thus, for example, the subjective (and divine) law of Antigone is serious because that position is pushed to its conclusion, its *Schluss*, in its confrontation with the (human) law of Creon. "Neither of the two laws, taken in isolation, is in itself and for itself."<sup>84</sup> The conclusion, which is tragic from the point of view of each individual, takes place in the actual outcome of the conflict, which participates, as a shared theatrical experience, in the ethical life of the city. It is here, in this ethical reality, that the two unilateral positions attain the highest ethical truth possible in the Ancient world, through their confrontation and overcoming.

Regarding seriousness, however, the same dynamic plays itself out in the modern world. In the *Philosophy of Right*, the opposition between individual moral self-consciousness and the universal good is only overcome when both sides are pushed to their endpoints in the concrete substance of ethical life. This concrete outcome takes place because, in fact, each term already contains its opposite in itself as its limit. Pushing each term to its endpoint means, therefore, pushing it to its own maximum, which is its opposite.<sup>85</sup> Seriousness arises in the dialectic between particular subjectivity and ethical objectivity.<sup>86</sup> This objectivity represents the concrete good precisely because particular subjectivity or rather particular subjectivities have immersed themselves in it and participate in it through their will and knowing. In ethical objectivity, they find their truth. "For true seriousness is only present through a substantial interest, a thing that is rich in content, the truth, ethical substance."<sup>87</sup> In the next chapter (Intermezzo), I will examine the linguistic nature of such objectivity.

The subjectivity that "submerges"<sup>88</sup> itself into and is absorbed by the ethical substance is serious. The self that remains aloof lends itself to irony. To the extent that the ironical subject does not allow itself to be incorporated into the ethical substance, its irony can be seen as a kind of blockage, a fixation or a "concentration of the I in the I"<sup>89</sup> that does not attain true, ethical objectivity. The self participates in this objectivity of the good insofar as it pushes itself to its own tragic endpoint. However, when the aloof subject sets himself in the face of objectivity, as if it formed an entirely external reality, it becomes an arbitrary content, an appearance without real consistency. Briefly, ethical objectivity presents itself to the ironic subject as just any other phenomenon in the sense of subjective idealism, as subjectively determinable and therefore without objective essence.

The condition for objective essentiality resides in the fact that the subjectivities immerse themselves in objectivity by their “knowing” and their “activity.” It is by acting in this way, so as to lose oneself in essential objectivity, that the subject develops his own essence. For, in Hegel, the essence of the individual is revealed in the seriousness of its loss, of its “zu Grund gehen,” where existence (*Dasein*) passes into its ground (*Grund*), which is its reason for being or rather its reason for having been. The ironic subject, holding himself removed from objectivity, has therefore no more essence than the purely arbitrary, empirical objectivity that it confronts fixedly. It remains a pure for-itself, since, as we have seen, in the subject-object relation typical of subjective idealism, essence remains hidden, in-itself and beyond. Conversely, essence, in order *to be* essence, must reveal itself. It reveals itself in the ethical substance, which must represent something more consistent, solid, and determinant than subjective individuality. The solidity of this substance results from its *Grund*, its essentiality and is expressed in “everything that still has for man value, dignity and is sacred,” i.e. what matters (*die Sache*) in religion, law and the institutions of the state. For the uninvolved ironic individual, things only represent a consumable objectivity, in the fiery crucible of subjective forms and desires. He is formally free to create and destroy.

The qualifier “divine” that Hegel attaches to the genius of the ironic artist reflects, as discussed earlier, the model of the Fichtean  $I = I$  in its absolute pretensions but transposed into the sphere of particular subjectivity. This absolute artistic subject is no more a subject-object “totality”<sup>90</sup> than is its Fichtean model: both are, according to Hegel, exclusively subjective and presuppose an inessential, determinable objectivity. That is why the divinity attributed to the genius subject is expressed in terms of a *deus absconditus*, who, in its limitless power and absolute freedom determines “from above” the course of the world. The images of *hauteur* that constantly reoccur in Hegel’s references to Schlegel’s irony should be seen in light of the notion of divine genius, which in turn can be understood with reference to individual subjectivity for-itself, detached from a reality that remains inessential. The agent that is necessary for the dissolution of this recalcitrant for-itself, in Hegelian dialectic, is the moment of the for-another—the fluidifying, evanescent element that arises between the in-itself and the for-itself. However, it is precisely the moment of the for-another that the ironic artist is missing. For although he lives in the world, the other selves that surround him have no other status than that of determinable appearances. As we saw in the lengthy quote earlier, “everything and everyone is a creation without essence.” The ironic subject perceives his human relations in the same light as

he perceives all objectivity, from above, and as with any object seen from above, they appear “stunted and flat.”

Regarding the will, this attitude toward others tends to divest them of selfhood, leaving them open to becoming potential objects of desire and seduction. In the above-quoted passage from the *Aesthetics*, Hegel specifically adds “lovers” to the “friends” with whom the artistic ironist may live, in apparent reference to the romantic circle of Jena,<sup>91</sup> or to the unmarried state between the lovers Julius and Lucinde in Schlegel’s novel. Only those sharing the same dominating perspective as that of the ironic individual are recognized as being “à la hauteur.”<sup>92</sup> However, paradoxically, such others (for example, the other members of the Jena circle) must be themselves virtuosi incapable of true inter-subjective recognition, in the Hegelian sense. For the virtuoso is essentially a monadic singularity and, to continue the analogy, between monads there are no “windows,” and no genuine communication possible.

### **Virtuosity and the genius of the ironic artist**

Dealing with the romantics, Hegel often takes up the terms that they themselves have coined, while reinterpreting them in his own way. Whether this procedure is seen as rhetorical trickery or, in a more Hegelian light, as philosophizing from the starting point of what is already there, his critique of Early German Romanticism evokes such key terms as *Witz*, *Virtuosität*, *Genialität*, and, above all, *Ironie* in order to give them a meaning that is radically different from their original sense. Hence, Hegel probably discovered the term “virtuoso” (in the romantic context) in Schleiermacher’s *Speeches on Religion* (1799).<sup>93</sup> Hegel’s use of the term in his *Aesthetics* focuses on the skillfulness of the ironic artist, skill in the sense of *Meisterschaft*—i.e. his ability to master and manipulate the inessential objectivity that surrounds him, while at the same time maintaining the original religious character of the term, where it may also apply to Schleiermacher, through the expression “divine genius.” Hegel puts it simply: “Now, this virtuosity can be understood as a divine genius.”<sup>94</sup> Particular subjectivity has declared itself all-powerful, with the (formal) freedom to create and destroy everything, in such a way that the *Meisterschaft* of virtuosity becomes the *Herrschaft* of the “free creator who knows himself to be independent and uninvolved in everything.”<sup>95</sup>

Applied to actual artistic activity, such genius remains “divine” insofar as its activity is seen as freely creating, and consequently, unconcerned with external rules and formulae. According to “a certain aspect,”<sup>96</sup> Hegel tells us, genius can be seen as a natural gift, as a kind of generalized talent. However, this gift, through

which the particular artistic subject freely expresses himself, is not *serious* as long as he is not disciplined through “exercise that is more or less extensive.”<sup>97</sup> Such discipline obviously involves more than the immediate knowledge of an objectivity that the subjective genius himself has posited; rather, it involves a “study of the external and internal worlds.”<sup>98</sup> This apprenticeship is necessary in order to complete and to discipline the immediate natural wisdom of artistic genius. It involves specific knowledge and learning, i.e. the content gleaned through the appropriate use of the understanding (*Verstand*). Unfortunately, on Hegel’s reading, Schlegel is one of those who happen to believe that “determinate, multiform knowledge [is] superfluous for the Idea, even contrary to it and beneath it.”<sup>99</sup>

Hegel’s interest in pedagogy is inseparable from his notion of seriousness, which represents a pre-condition for teaching in general, and particularly, for the teaching of philosophy.<sup>100</sup> While the acquisition of specific knowledge is attributed to the workings of the understanding, it is crucial to note that the *Verstand*, in its pedagogical vocation, is not to be reduced to the aspects of Kantian subjectivity that I have been discussing earlier, namely the fiery crucible of forms in which worldly phenomena are digested as mere appearances. Rather, in the pedagogical context, the understanding is responsible for the intellectual work through which the subject becomes involved in the ethical substance, in order to acquire truly objective content. This work of apprenticeship is developed through habit and discipline,<sup>101</sup> where one can be said to “lose oneself” in the material studied. As well, it is the serious work of habituation and discipline that places self-consciousness in a relation of mutual recognition with other self-consciousnesses (i.e. that allows consciousness to become *self-consciousness*) in order to form the ethical substance in which it participates through its active cognition. In a similar fashion, it is the fear of the (tragic) loss of particular subjectivity and the discipline of work that completes the liberating apprenticeship of the slave, as well as that of “each man” who raises himself to the ethical life of the state.

The trembling of the singularity of the will,—the feeling of the nothingness of self-emptiness [*Selbstsucht*],—the habit of obedience, this is a necessary stage in the education of each man.<sup>102</sup>

The fact that the divine genius remains uninvolved in ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), can be explained, in the context of artistic expression, by his recalcitrance toward habitual discipline, which is a necessary element in the education of the genuine artistic genius. Reluctance to learn is closely related to the detached

attitude regarding others, and thus regarding ethical life in general. Other people (e.g. friends, lovers) are only present for the divine genius in order to reflect his genius back to him in all its splendor. Consequently, the romantic circle of Jena represents the structure of a specific form of “community”: a group of monadic beautiful souls. Such a collectivity of individuals is contrary to the idea of ethical life. For in the former, “the bond and the substance” are merely “the splendor of this self-knowing and this expression of oneself.”<sup>103</sup>

The solipsistic detachment of the ironic artist is reflected in his artistic production. It is noteworthy that, insofar as he is first taken, in the above-quoted text from the *Aesthetics*, as a *living* individual, his production is no different from that of any other individual: his life consists in realizing himself phenomenologically, i.e. in externalizing himself. Since we are dealing here with an expressed content that is natural (i.e. life), this externalization does not achieve substantial actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) but remains a “realisieren.”<sup>104</sup> As a result, we have not attained the level where mutual recognition between self-consciousnesses is possible. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*: “When I act substantially [*wirklich handle*], I am conscious of an ‘other’, of a substantial actuality that is present, and of one that I seek to fulfill; I have a determined purpose and a determined duty.”<sup>105</sup> However, the ironic genius only “abandons himself to his own specific particularity,” without worrying about a real purpose.<sup>106</sup> His artistic expression, in that it excludes both external apprenticeship and a determined purpose, remains thoroughly natural. This is why the genius of artistic irony does nothing other than “live as an artist” or “configure his life artistically.”<sup>107</sup> In other words, the only content externalized by the artist of irony is his particular life itself, to which he lends an artistic form (*Gestalt*). Whatever form is expressed, it can do nothing other than reproduce, as a work, *himself*. Thus for him, there is no difference in content between the products of his artistic activity, the novels, plays, poems, aphorisms, etc. and his artistically configured life, for example, his way of dressing, his witty remarks, or the way he drinks his tea, chooses his wine, or reads the newspaper.

The act of positing oneself as the artist and the *oeuvre* of irony is ultimately only *for* the artist himself: “I live as an artist if all my actions, all my expression, regardless of their subject matter, remain *for me* only an appearance [*Schein*] and take on a form that remains under my power.”<sup>108</sup> Reduced, on one hand, to the purely vital act of an arbitrary externalization and, on the other, to the exclusively subjective action of a self-positing-for-oneself, the artistic expression of the ironic artist (i.e. himself as a contingent content) remains a

pure appearance for-himself, entirely “under [his] power.” Briefly put, he is only an artist in that he believes himself to be one; he is only an artist in his own eyes.

### The ironic artist and “His” public

Schlegel’s failure as an artist can be measured with regard to his relationship to the public—a relationship tainted with disdain. This element is found in the section of the introduction to the *Lectures on Esthetics* entitled “The Dramatic Work in its Relation to the Public”<sup>109</sup> where “Tieck and the Schlegel brothers” are discussed as representatives of a “modern” trend in the theatre. The trend, which involves disdain for the public, is irony, where, as we have seen, the artist expresses nothing but his own particular individuality. Fixated in the exclusive character of the *for-itself*, the ironic artist refuses what might constitute the healthy fluidifying element of the *for-another*. The hermetic aspect of the *for-itself* is first emphasized in the artist’s desire to represent himself as absolutely unique, in his monadic individuality, with respect to other people; second, in only creating for himself, the artist refuses to create *for* others.

From a certain point of view, the ironic artist, who disdains the public while only producing or reproducing himself *for* himself, represents a possible solution to the problem of dramatic art in general: how to please everyone when this “everyone,” as a “collective being, is made up of very heterogeneous elements who differ by their degree of culture, by their intellectual level, by their esthetic education, by their preferences, etc.”<sup>110</sup> Indeed, in order to please this diversity, “the author must possess a talent for baseness [*Schlechten*] and a certain carelessness with regard to the demands of genuine art.”<sup>111</sup> However, the disdain for the public only represents one unilateral solution (*Ausweg*) to this aporia, i.e. one afforded by the *for-itself*. The other one-sided extreme consists in acting “like our neighbors the French, [who] do the opposite: they write in view of an immediate effect and always have their eyes fixed on the public.”<sup>112</sup>

The French solution (which exaggerates the opposite tendency: the *for-another*) can at least contribute to the development of “a certain esthetic taste,” while the German trend, according to Hegel, is “too inclined to irony” and only contributes to “an anarchy that makes each one judge according to his own contingent point of view, his personal feelings, momentary whims and arbitrarily dispenses either blame or praise.”<sup>113</sup> In this way, the ironic individual subject who only writes for himself is reflected in the public that he disdains, which itself appears as an accidental multitude of individualities, each one “*for-itself*.” Consequently, the ironic dramatic artist, in his quest for

originality, can only reproduce *himself*, first in his actual work, which is just an expression of his own individual subjectivity, but also in “his” public, which is nothing other than the projected diversity of other “original” individualities who are just like him. Briefly put, the self-centered expressions of the ironic artist actually produce the public to whom they are meant to appeal.

The true solution regarding dramatic success is neither to be found in the German “for-itself” moment nor in the French “for-another” moment but rather in a number of requirements to which the artist must bend himself (*sich unterwerfen*). Only in this way can he produce a dramatic work possessing the “liveliness [*Lebendigkeit*]” that will allow it to be favorably received “by its people [*bei seinem Volke*].”<sup>114</sup>

The German ironic artist must therefore come down from his summit [*Gipfel*], bending himself to those universal demands that will lend to his work “its own life.”<sup>115</sup> Such organic independence is a necessary condition for any genuine work of art, to the extent that it represents, in syllogistic terms, a singularity that issues forth from a universal interest, combined with the particularity of work itself. However, as we have seen, the ironic artist refuses the labor of apprenticeship, and his work is only the immediate reflection (in the binary form of judgment rather than in the content-ful form of the syllogism) of his own individuality taken as an absolute expression of  $I = I$ . As well, it is significant that the genuine artist must direct his expressions toward his “people” and not toward his public. It is with regard to the former that his success must be measured.<sup>116</sup> The artist’s goals must come from a “universal human interest or be grounded upon a pathos that represents, for the people for whom he produces, a valuable and substantial pathos.”<sup>117</sup> Contrary to the public, which is defined as an innumerable multitude of monadic singularities, “the people” represents, following Herder,<sup>118</sup> a more substantial cultural entity, one that constitutes an essential element in the life of the Hegelian organic state. Artistic work which cannot engender an objectivity richer than that of “the public” is inimical to ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).

The notion of a people that participates in the life of the state should also be seen as contributing to the movement of Spirit, in which the entity of the state is an essential protagonist. In the following passage, it is ultimately with regard to the central concept of Spirit that the ironic artist is judged, a judgment aimed at both the Schlegel brothers and the writer Ludwig Tieck.

The German author seeks, above all, to express his particular individuality without making his production [*Sache*] agreeable to the listener or the spectator. On the contrary, each one, according to his German individuality, must have

something other than the others in order to present himself as original. Thus, for example, Tieck and the Schlegel brothers, who, in their ironic character, according to which they were not able to draw inspiration from the soul and the spirit of their nation and their time, attacked Schiller and insulted him because he had found, for the rest of us Germans, the right tone and had become more popular.<sup>119</sup>

The ironic separation between such dramatic artists as Tieck and Schlegel, and the ethical substance of their time, i.e. their alienation from the moment of Spirit in which they live, prevents them from drawing richness (*Gehalt*) from it, neither as a substantial pathos nor, which is the same, as a universal interest.

The reference to Schiller in this short passage is significant, not only because it juxtaposes his theatrical success with Schlegel's failure, but also because it serves to confirm the judgment that Hegel had passed on Schlegel as a result of his *Lucinde*. What Hegel is referring to is a critique that Schlegel wrote in the journal *Deutschland*, in 1796, which had scandalized Hegel, and apparently Goethe,<sup>120</sup> to such a degree that Hegel came back to it (and to *Lucinde*) in his *Lectures on Esthetics*, 20-odd years later. It should be noted that Schiller's *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man* were, for Hegel, a crucial work, which he first encountered in the journal *Horen*. Besides the fundamental idea that the accomplishment of humanity<sup>121</sup> takes place as the expression of absolute beauty, Hegel seems to have drawn from Schiller's *Letters* the related notion of barbarity, which I will discuss below. For now, it should simply be noted how Hegel's admiration for Schiller throws his judgment of Schlegel into contrast:

It is the great merit of Schiller to have overcome the subjectivity and abstraction of Kantian thought and to have attempted to conceive through thought and to realize in art: unity and reconciliation as the sole expression of truth.<sup>122</sup>

Hegel's irritation regarding Schlegel is understandable, given the latter's attack against someone so worthy and who had "the great merit to have overcome the subjectivity and abstraction" of Kantian thought, i.e. to have overcome precisely the position exemplified by Schlegel.

## Pleasure and vanity

### The self-satisfaction of the ironic virtuoso

Hegel's esthetics cannot be properly addressed without reference to questions of form (*Form*) and content (*Inhalt*). Indeed, it is the interplay between the two



concepts that produces the Hegelian development between different esthetic figures and moments. Thus, concerning the ironic artist, for example in the above-quoted text from the *Lectures on Esthetics*, the term “content” appears along with its more substantial embodiment, “richness” (*Gehalt*). Form may appear under the derivatives “formalism” (*Formalismus*) and “formal” (*formell*). In the context of romantic irony, the notion of form clearly refers to the Kantian model of subjectivity, i.e. first and foremost to the pure forms of intuition that are foundational to all individual cognitive experience, where they represent both “the subjective condition of all the intuitions that we may have,”<sup>123</sup> and the structuring work of the understanding’s categories themselves. Because it is essentially form, the Kantian understanding can exert its synthesizing, unifying function, both on the knowing subject itself and on the phenomenal objectivity it knows. Of course, the subjective form found in Kant undergoes a fundamental development in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. However, this development can be seen as springing from the hypothesis sketched out by Kant himself in paragraph 77 of the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment*: the idea of a fully intuitive understanding that would not rely on external material received through the intuition but which would create its own content, “an understanding in the most universal sense,” as Kant puts it, i.e. what will become the Absolute Subject of German Idealism.

The Hegelian Absolute should be conceived as universal subjectivity, a form that “freely divests itself”<sup>124</sup> (*sich selbst frei entlässt*) of its natural content in order to reclaim it once again, now “spiritualized.” Contrarily, the particular subject who claims to do the same, who claims to immediately produce *ex nihilo* its own content falls infinitely short of such a creative form. It cannot get beyond the strictly “formal” aspect. This is the case with the ironic artist, whose formal freedom resides in the act of producing himself for himself as his own content.

In the Absolute Subject, what Hegel calls the Idea, the creative act of self-production as content is nothing other than the circular movement of the *Encyclopedic* system in its totality, where the Idea (the Logic) freely lets itself go as Nature, which it overcomes and takes up again through the process of Spirit. Thus, the Idea fills itself (“ful-fills” itself)<sup>125</sup> with a content (Nature) that seems alien but which turns out to be the Idea itself in the shape (or rather, shapes) of otherness. For the Absolute Subject, filling itself (*sich erfüllen*) with its natural content brings about the absolute enjoyment—the absolute self-enjoyment that Hegel ascribes to Absolute Spirit at the end of the *Encyclopedia*, with reference to the enjoyment that Aristotle finds in God’s self-contemplation.

The particular subject may likewise seek to “ful-fill” himself. However, here, we are dealing with a finite understanding, conceived as an empty form that receives diverse intuitions and sensations which it *understands* as phenomena. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the particular ironic subject tends to “forget,” with the help of his own sophistry and hypocrisy, that he himself has forged these appearances/phenomena that he takes as reality. These remarks hopefully shed light on the scandalous nature of self-satisfaction and the “self-enjoyment”<sup>126</sup> that Hegel attributes to the ironic subjectivity of Schlegel.

Generally speaking, in Hegel, the feeling of pleasure implies a particular relationship with objectivity. The richer and more substantial such objectivity is, the more spiritual is the pleasure procured through subjective involvement in it. On a purely animal level, the natural subject experiences “a feeling of lack and the desire to remove it.”<sup>127</sup> Desire, which here is merely instinctual, pushes the living individual on to the immediate, animal consumption of equally natural objectivity. Pleasure, on this level, is the satisfaction that results from the assimilation of the desired thing. As well, according to Hegel, animal satisfaction derives from the digestive internalizing of objectivity through organic “anger,” in the bodily form of bile. Through this satisfaction, “subjective identity” becomes *for-itself* what it was before *in-itself*. In other words, “the process that was directed towards the external difference reverses itself into a process of the organism within itself and the result is not the mere production of a means but that of an end, i.e. *the concentration of the self in itself*.”<sup>128</sup> At the level of strictly animal satisfaction, with its scatological outcome, we find virtually the same terms that Hegel uses when describing the ironic individual that is Schlegel. “Such is the general meaning of the divine ironic genius: it is the concentration of the I in the I, for whom all bonds are broken and who can only live in the happiness procured by self-enjoyment.”<sup>129</sup>

### Pleasure and sacrilege

In fact, it is only at a higher spiritual level, that of self-consciousness, where animal satisfaction is transformed into genuine enjoyment. Thus, in the *Phenomenology*, we find that “the immediate relation [to a thing] becomes, for the master, the pure negation of that thing or enjoyment [:] to have done with the thing: satisfaction in enjoyment.”<sup>130</sup> However, even if satisfaction becomes enjoyment and even if enjoyment accompanies spirit throughout its self-movement until the end of its odyssey at the very end of the *Encyclopedia*, where “the eternal Idea that is in-and-for-itself activates itself, engenders itself

and enjoys itself eternally as Absolute Spirit,”<sup>131</sup> the satisfaction never loses its two fundamental determinations: its *vital* aspect and the relation of immediacy between subject and object. At the level of the Idea, i.e. of the Absolute Subject that releases itself into nature and takes itself up again as Spirit, vitality refers to the life of Spirit in its organic, systematic movement. Still at the level of the Idea, immediacy occurs as one that is *rediscovered*, hence mediated by the circular path that it has followed.

On the other hand, at the level of the particular subject, the vital aspect of satisfaction is limited to what is partial, i.e. to the natural, and the immediacy in question remains that of objectivity offering itself up, without mediation, to the empty forms of the self: theoretically, as sensations represented as phenomena, practically (ethically) as singular objects of the will. Consequently, in the *living* individual,<sup>132</sup> enjoyment, through its aspect of immediacy, is not deferred to the end of an operation but tends to erupt right away:

[Self-consciousness] throws itself into life, and brings the pure individuality in which it surfaces to fulfillment. Rather than constructing its own happiness, it takes it immediately and enjoys it.<sup>133</sup>

The living individual as a particular self thus immediately enjoys a foreign content with which it fills itself. The difference between the enjoyment of the Absolute Subject, which, at the end of the *Encyclopedia* “enjoys itself”<sup>134</sup> in filling itself with its own content and the enjoyment of the particular subject, who also enjoys its own content, is based on the content that is posited by these subjective forms. In the particular subject, the content is nothing other than its own empty, subjective identity (its own forms), whereas the Absolute Subject posits a content that becomes spiritually substantial, an essential content that is *Gehalt* and not simply *Inhalt*.

The divine pretensions of the ironic genius remain shot through with particularity, with naturalness. His “divinity” is consequently only for-himself “what it was already in itself.”<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, the eternal Idea is always already in-and-for-itself, and as such enjoys itself through its own ever-present actuality.

The sacrilegious aspect of Schlegel’s individuality was likely reinforced, for Hegel, by Schlegel’s conversion to Catholicism in 1808. This aspect comes to light when contrasted with what Hegel considers to be the divine enjoyment that the particular subject experiences in the Lutheran Holy Communion. In the act of consuming the host and annihilating this consecrated externality, the believer feels an enjoyment that is nothing less than the presence of God (the

Idea) who Himself enjoys the annihilation of his own natural exteriority. The divine presence is experienced neither in the host as a consumed object nor in the believer as a consuming subject but rather in the spiritual enjoyment of nature's overcoming.

In the "Lutheran church, the host as such is consecrated, and raised up to God becoming present in it, first and only in the enjoyment, i.e. in the annihilation of His exteriority."<sup>136</sup> The enjoyment in the Communion is a singular moment of the divine pleasure, God's enjoyment in becoming Spirit through the destruction of His external nature.

Just as, with regard to the natural (living) individual subject, satisfaction derives from the "digestive" internalizing of anger (bile) working against the externality consumed, divine enjoyment occurs when God "digests" its other, i.e. nature. This idea is expressed in one of Hegel's Jena aphorisms (around 1803).

This anger, [...] is the destruction of nature. [The] externalization is just as much an absolute self-internalizing, a becoming of the centre. In this, the anger devours and swallows up its figures [*Gestaltungen*] [:] their bones are ground up and their flesh is wrung until it attains that fluidity. The wrath of God toward Himself in its otherness [...]<sup>137</sup>

Here, at this Absolute level, the "concentration of the self in itself" that we witnessed in the subjective individuality who assimilates another that is really only itself is expressed as "an absolute self-internalizing, a becoming the centre." The individual who enjoys the Lutheran Holy Communion participates in this divine digestion of nature but only in that the host has been previously consecrated in the church, in the breast of the community of believers. As such, the Protestant host no longer represents the "external thing" that is its Catholic counterpart. The Catholic host, as an external thing, can only achieve a phenomenal existence, a self-projection whose consumption provides (on Hegel's reading) an animal satisfaction; conversely, the Protestant host is something de-natured or spiritualized in the ethical life of shared belief. It is, in this sense, *Gehalt*, something substantial, essentially rich, whose enjoyment is absolutely not the "self-enjoyment" that Hegel finds at the heart of artistic irony.

I have attempted to show how the ironic individual's self-enjoyment, his taking pleasure in himself, can be seen as a kind of auto-digestion that ends in a concentration of the self in itself, an interiorizing movement that, through infinite reflection, proves to be both productive and destructive of appearance (*Schein*). It is from such interiorizing and from this consumption of the I in the I that we will witness the manifestation of another form of irony, where

the subjective interiority is even more radical than what we have found in the Hegelian figure of Schlegel. This ultimate form no longer posits itself in order to then take itself up again but instead satisfies itself in the “vanity of all that matters [*alles Sachlichen*], of all that is ethical [*Sittlichen*], of all that is rich in content, with the nullity of all that is objective and possessing real value.”<sup>138</sup> It is a form of skepticism, even of nihilism, in which all action, including the empty act of judging, becomes vain. The self-digestion implicit in self-enjoyment will help us understand the morbidity of this ironic state, which we will discover in our Chapter 2 discussion of Novalis.

### **Irony: Vanity that renders all vain**

Of course, the character traits that Hegel attributes to Schlegel’s personality draw the portrait of a “bad” subjectivity, as Otto Pöggeler notes in his work on Hegel and Early German Romanticism. However, it is crucial to understand that this subjectivity is only bad with regard to its relation to objectivity, to the world that is *objective* in a way that allows it to constitute the content of Hegelian Science. When the ironic individuality of Schlegel is presented as pleasure-seeking, a seducer, as hypocritically sophisticated or dominating, in each case we observe a depreciation of the objective world grasped as a place of truth and meaning or, to use more speculative language, as a place of existing essence. The irony that Hegel sees as incarnate in Schlegel represents an active depreciation of the substantial, essential objectivity of the world. The work of the ironic individual is actually destructive of true objectivity, and, to the extent this is what forms the content of Science, destructive of objective truth.

This definition of romantic irony is enunciated in a passage from Hegel’s “Review of the *Posthumous Writings and Correspondence of Solger*” (published in 1828).<sup>139</sup> The fully polemical passage targets Schlegel, at a time when, reciprocally, the latter had begun to “make public his opinion on Hegel.”<sup>140</sup> In this passage, the definition of irony as the “self-conscious depreciation [*Vereitelung*] of what is objective”<sup>141</sup> is explained in greater depth through Hegel’s ontological interpretation of judging (*Urteilen*). It is this concept that allows us to grasp both the fundamentally linguistic nature of the depreciative action carried out on objective reality as well as the discursive nature of the objectivity at stake: Hegelian Science apprehended as *logos*.

To introduce Schlegel in this text, Hegel begins by favorably quoting his late colleague K.W. F. Solger’s (negative) judgment regarding “Friedrich von Schlegel’s

way of describing Indian religion.” Adopting Solger’s point of view, Hegel states that Schlegel’s “terminology” produces “unilateral and empty concepts” such as “emanation, pantheism, dualism, etc.” These concepts are applied to the Indian topic (*Sache*) in an artificial way, since “no people nor man has ever seriously adopted” them. Referring to the way of thinking of the *Aufklärung*, i.e. to unilateral understanding (*Verstand*), the text ends as follows: “[these concepts] have their origins [at a time] when living knowledge was cruelly anatomized.” Then, in an aside, Hegel seems to turn the same criticism against Solger and Ludwig Tieck who, in their published correspondence, would have done better to avoid expressions like “mysticism, interior life, poetry and particularly irony, but also religion and philosophy.” In abstaining from using such empty terms, they would have been obliged “to speak of what matters [*von der Sache*] and [real] content.”<sup>142</sup>

Hegel thus establishes a relation between the use of empty concepts of the understanding and the inability to develop a discourse that is truly philosophical, one that speaks of what matters and real content. Discourse consisting of empty concepts is empty of content; it remains purely formal. Hegel calls the “judging manner” the form of conceptual thinking which, as we just saw, cruelly anatomizes “living knowledge”; this manner constitutes “a decidedly negative tendency against objectivity.”<sup>143</sup>

Already in his Jena aphorisms, Hegel is particularly acerbic regarding this way of judging:

Critics are grave-diggers. [...] Judging means putting to death, presenting what is individual, not what matters [*die Sache*], as if the former were what is living, rather than the true.<sup>144</sup>

Judgment appears here as something standing against *life* and truth, thrusting aside substantial objectivity (*die Sache*). The “life” in question is that of the concept, i.e. the movement of thought toward becoming a differentiated, organic totality, i.e. the Truth. However, it is important to note the consciously ambiguous character of judgment in Hegel. Within the context of Hegelian Science, relative to the movement of the concept, judgment is apprehended as an *Ur-teilen*,<sup>145</sup> an original dividing that is the primal moment of separation, without which the concept would be unable to develop itself into mediation and reconciliation. In this way, we understand that the “return into itself” of the concept must first involve “the absolute, original self-division [...] as *judgment*.”<sup>146</sup>

However, at the level of subjective thought, judgment represents an expression of division that is carried out by the understanding (*Verstand*),

which “tears from one another the various abstract determinations that are immediately assembled in the concrete singularity of the object, separating them from the object.”<sup>147</sup> It is at the level of the understanding’s subjective thinking that judgment can take the form of an act of “cruel” division, one that “anatomizes” life in its organic totality. Such a dissection involves two aspects: first, the fact that judgment takes objects in their singularity and, then, the act of critical predication,<sup>148</sup> which separates its subjects, tearing them from their own determinations. Such separation stands opposed to the Hegelian logic of speculative discourse, where the grammatical/ontological subject should be seen as positing itself in its predicate.

The tearing-away action of critical predication, as practiced by the understanding, i.e. the declarative judgments of the particular subject who arbitrarily claims that “A is B,” is considered as a “negative tendency against objectivity” to the extent that “the object is still grasped as a given, as something dependent on something else, conditioned by something else.”<sup>149</sup> The way in which the understanding judges objectivity, thus putting substantial objectivity out of play, produces a formal language—one that arbitrarily employs “a kind of name”<sup>150</sup> as the grammatical subject (like Hegel’s above-cited examples “emanation,” “pantheism,” “inner life”), in order to represent a concept that is both universal and empty. Consequently, “it is in fact only representation that forms the presupposed meaning of the [grammatical] subject.”<sup>151</sup> The predicate remains independent of the subject, which is taken as a mere representation insofar as it does not posit itself in its predicate, as is the case with speculative language within the Hegelian system. Contrarily, in the language of particular, critical judgment, the relation between subject and predicate remains arbitrary or “subjective,” and only brings about subjective representations. These “presupposed” representations are the “empty concepts” discussed in Hegel’s *Review of Solger’s work*, and which Hegel attributes to Schlegel.

The negative tendency toward substantial objectivity (the tendency attributed to Schlegel’s “judging way” and his irony) consists in tearing away its truth or essence, which becomes a thing-in-itself, i.e. an essential “beyond,” the object of subjective feeling. What remains is an unessential determination: an objectivity that is reduced to subjectively determinable appearance or representation. It is this objectivity alone that constitutes the “thing” (*Ding*) for “the Fichtean philosophy of subjectivity.”<sup>152</sup> In other words, in the “judging way,” true objectivity (of the Thing (*Sache*)) is drained of its essence, which is sent beyond, leaving present only an impoverished world, a multiplicity of infinitely determinable, singular data, empty signs devoid of substance.

We thus come again to the definition of irony that we encountered above: “the self-conscious depreciation [*Vereitelung*] of what is objective.”<sup>153</sup> Now, having examined the decisive action of judgment, it is possible to further define the sense that Hegel attributes to the key word *Vereitelung*, which we have first translated as “depreciation.” In order to grasp the complete meaning of the German term, it is necessary to comprehend the signification that Hegel attaches to its root—to a word that reappears frequently when he discusses Schlegel’s irony: *Eitelkeit*, translated as “vanity.” As in English, the German word has a double meaning that is essential to how Hegel comprehends romantic irony, of which Schlegel is the “father.”<sup>154</sup> The double meaning permits occasional wordplay that is revealing. For as with “vanity” or “vain,” *Eitelkeit* or *eitel* carries both the meaning of “presumption” and the more original sense of “empty” or “nothingness,” and even “that which has no reality.” According to its first meaning, vanity is applied to the ironic subject as artist, i.e. to the “divine genius” who raises himself to “lord and master” over objectivity: “master” insofar as his life, as the artistic expression of his virtuosity is a “playing with all the forms,” which, as we have seen, are only the illusory projections of his own selfhood; “lord” because, for him, objectivity is no more than finite, diverse, singular appearances (*Scheinen*) that are there for his consumption. Such presumption thus reveals itself to be “divine.” The self-consciousness of the ironic subject makes himself the “free creator” of all reality and, through feeling, claims to enjoy immediate knowledge of the Absolute.

While vanity-presumption is applicable to the ironic subject incarnated by Schlegel, it is the second meaning of the word “vanity,” as “emptiness,” that best qualifies the fate of objectivity for the ironic subject; it is emptied of all substantiality, of all concrete reality. Since such empty objectivity lacks ground (*Grund*) as its own essence, it falls short of real existence. Its emptiness means it is completely indeterminate, confined to the realm of purely natural, infinitely dispersed empirical being. What we now see is that the vanity (emptiness) of such objectivity is the result of the vanity (presumptive judgment) of the ironic subject. This individual finds himself faced with an emptiness that is ultimately nothing other than the reflection of his own empty selfhood, a reflection that takes place through his own judgments, all of which can be reduced to the enunciation of  $I = I$ . In emptying objectivity of its “life and truth,” ironic self-consciousness has made for itself, on one hand, a ghostly noumenal world, beyond all sensuous knowing, and, on the other hand, a purely natural, empirical reality, devoid of all inherent meaning.



It therefore becomes possible to gain deeper and broader insight into a sentence such as the following: “[*Weltweisheit*] is the vanity that raises the vain [...] to an absolute principle.”<sup>155</sup> *Weltweisheit* is the subjective *conceit* that raises the empty appearance of objectivity to the principle of the absolute. *Weltweisheit* is that subjective *emptiness* that raises the empty appearance of objectivity to the principle of the Absolute. *Weltweisheit* is the subjective emptiness that raises the objective emptiness of the thing-in-itself to the principle of the Absolute. *Weltweisheit* is the subjective emptiness that raises itself, as emptiness, to absolute status.

The apparently summary definition with which Hegel begins the passage from his Review of Solger’s work (“The self-conscious depreciation [*Vereitelung*] of what is objective has been called irony”) must be understood according to that web of meaning implicit in the relation between the vanity of the subject and the vanity of the object, for vanity constitutes the nucleus of *Vereitelung*, which, as irony, describes a particular, active relation between self-consciousness and objectivity. Thus, we might be tempted to put forward a more faithful translation of *Vereitelung* by replacing “depreciation” with “evacuation,” to the extent that the latter term signifies the act of emptying.<sup>156</sup> The sentence might thus be read: “The self-conscious evacuation of what is objective has been called irony.” This translation captures the reciprocal nature of the subject who renders objectivity empty by emptying himself of his own representations (which he then receives as external), but it has the disadvantage of losing the meaning of vanity as presumption, which is contained in the German word.

The other possible meaning of *Vereitelung* is one of “preventing,”—in the sense of “making vain” or “thwarting.” Ironic self-consciousness would then represent, according to this signification, a pitfall or hindrance to objectivity but only insofar as objectivity is taken as a project or a plan carried out through movement. Indeed, ironic consciousness does represent a kind of blockage or fixation on the path to absolute knowing and Science, a fixation that is meant to be overcome in the *Phenomenology*. However, given the contemporary character that Hegel assigns to ironic individuality, in his later writings, there is every reason to believe that irony represents for him an obstacle of a far more enduring nature.

Ultimately, all of the above translations are possible because *Vereitelung* contains within it all of these significations: depreciation, vanity, evacuation, and hindrance. Such “vanitization”<sup>157</sup> represents the reflexive interplay between the vanity (in both senses of the term) of the ironic subject and the objectivity that he renders vain or empty through the operation of judgments, and which,

as empty subjective content, reconstitutes and reflects the vanity of the ironic subject. Through this interplay appears a final meaning for the term—that of radical negativity, a kind of annihilation of both subject and object, the sort of *mise-en-abîme* one might experience when caught between two mirrors facing one another. It is this last sense of *Vereitelung*, and thus of irony, that will come to light through our discussion of the (Hegelian) figure of Novalis. Indeed, the ironic form that Hegel attributes to Schlegel, when it is pushed to its extreme, collapses from within, allowing us to perceive the shadowy figure of his “symphilosophical” partner, Novalis.

However, we must hold off on this inevitable collapse into that figure, which represents a radical form of skepticism, even a nihilism, where all objectivity ceases to exist, in order to first deal with a question that is fundamental to my argument. If the evil specific to Schlegel results from the fact that his judgments are pronounced upon true objectivity (or on objective truth), what constitutes that objectivity in terms of Hegelian Science? In other words, Hegel seems to find the ironic individuality of Schlegel “bad” because his judgments are aimed at the State, Religion, Art, and Philosophy, the most spiritual contents of Hegel’s Science. However, we might then wonder how such contents might claim to form, for Hegel, true objectivity or objective truth. It seems clear that if the action of vanitization takes place through the linguistic form of judgment, then the scientific objectivity against which irony acts must be equally linguistic in nature.



# Intermezzo 1: Words and things

## Scientific objectivity and discourse

It is impossible to understand the full meaning of Hegel's criticism of irony as a *Vereitelung* (vanitization) of what is truly objective without also fully grasping the nature of that objectivity. This means apprehending Hegelian objectivity in its relation to a form of discourse that claims scientific status. Any epistemological study that is pertinent should deal with the question of language, and this is particularly true where the notions of objectivity and science are as radically reinterpreted as they are in Hegel. Succinctly put, we must see how Hegel's science is objective, i.e. existing and true, insofar as it is *logos*.

Failure to comprehensively understand the nature of Hegelian scientific language has allowed to go unchallenged a widespread misunderstanding regarding the nature of Hegelian objectivity. This misunderstanding can be bluntly summarized as follows: the world itself operates dialectically, obeying an inherently dialectical logic. It is true that this view appears readily verifiable with regard to that part of worldly objectivity Hegel deals with on the Spirit side of his philosophy, for example the rise of consciousness and inter-subjective relations. Indeed, spirit, as human activity, can easily be said to reflect thought or "mind," which, as the *Logics* tell us, is inherently dialectical. And it is this objectivity or "second nature"<sup>1</sup> that most commentators are interested in. When the natural world itself is brought into consideration, however, there is some consternation. It is indeed hard to maintain, for example, that cosmological phenomena and chemical reactions operate along strictly dialectical lines. Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* therefore has, until recently, tended to be taken less seriously, or ignored.<sup>2</sup>

However, even when the inherently dialectical nature of Hegelian objectivity is ascribed solely to the Spirit side of his philosophy, crucial (Kierkegaardian, Marxian) questions arise concerning the coherency of the entire philosophical endeavor. If objectivity itself operates dialectically, what is the status of the philosopher subject (i.e. Hegel)? Or, more precisely, what is the status of Hegel's scientific discourse? From where does it derive its own objectivity and truth? It should be obvious to readers of Hegel that his scientific discourse cannot claim

to simply *represent* or *reflect* objectivity, and garner its own truthfulness and objectivity from the exactness of this representation.<sup>3</sup>

Such a view could not help but fall within what Hegel refers to as (Kantian) subjective idealism, i.e. the representation, whether faithful or not, would never be more than mere appearance (*Schein*), the reflection of Hegel's own self-certainty; the supposed "truth," stemming from personal observations, would, in fact, reflect nothing other than subjective certitude. In other words, this view contradicts Hegel's explicit rejection of scientific truth based purely on confirmed observation (perception) of empirical, experimental data, which we find reiterated in all his major works and in a good deal of his minor ones.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that Hegel entirely discounts empirical science. For example, as I will show, there is a place, or a level, for the representations of the natural sciences within the body of systematic (philosophical, Hegelian) Science. However, as we will see, this level of representation only achieves objective truth through a certain notion of discourse that is essential to Science.

Hegel's repudiation of sense perception as an adequate ground for systematic, objective truth must be understood in linguistic terms; sense certainty goes hand in hand with the notion of referential language, i.e. with the idea that language refers to, reflects or denotes an objectivity which is real but somehow removed from the language itself. According to this view, truth and objectivity are entirely based on the exactness of the reflection, on the faithfulness of how "sentence-tokens"<sup>5</sup> signify "reality." Although many commentators understand Hegel's critique of sense perception and its corresponding referential language,<sup>6</sup> they seem unable to break away from the idea of Hegel-empiricist, the lucid and profound observer of the world around him. I believe this is because they have been unable to grasp the true nature of Hegel's scientific language as non-referential, where there is no distance between signifier and signified, and where the objectivity of language is not the impoverished objectivity of "sentence-tokens."

In dealing with the question of how Hegel sees the truth of his discourse as objective, I therefore want to show that his claim to scientific truth implies a certain grasp of objectivity different from the one summarized earlier, and a certain notion of language that is not referential and which is constitutive of Hegelian objectivity. More explicitly, I will argue that the Hegelian idea of Science supposes a discourse that is not only objectively true but is also, itself, true objectivity.

The use of the term "objectivity" in the preceding paragraphs may cause some puzzlement. This is because we are accustomed to using the term in two

distinct acceptations: (1) in the sense of non-subjective, non-arbitrary truth; (2) in the sense of a concrete reality existing outside the subject. By saying that, for Hegel, science is a discourse that is “not only objectively true but is also, itself true objectivity,” I am purposely conflating the two acceptations. For Hegel, scientific objectivity is non-subjective, non-arbitrary truth existing as a concrete reality. I am also saying this reality is discourse, scientific discourse itself.

It is also important to emphasize a point which may, at first, appear redundant, but which is crucial. Scientific discourse, for Hegel, is exclusively that discourse which deals with the objects of science. This clearly implies that there are objects which are not addressed by science, i.e. there is a non-scientific objectivity, and there are discourses which are also non-scientific. However, if we are to take Hegel’s scientific claims seriously, as I am doing, then we must respect this often ignored distinction. All objectivity is not scientific. All discourse is not scientific. The discourse of Science does not deal with all objectivity.

Initially, the issue is how scientific discourse can be objectively true, i.e. how it can relate to its objects, for example to such worldly manifestations as the state, history, art, religion, and nature, without merely reflecting them.<sup>7</sup> According to my argument, these manifestations must somehow be embodied in true scientific discourse as its true, objective content.

This idea of *content* which is also the *object* of Science is important to grasp. Hegelian Science does not study its objects in a detached analytical way, in order to draw conclusions about them and test these conclusions against empirical data. Hegelian Science claims to hold within itself, as content, the objects of its discourse. Or, science is no more than the ultimate articulation of its objects/contents. Hegel expresses the richness of this content by using the term *Gehalt*, rather than *Inhalt*. To use a vulgar example, the former term might apply in stating, “milk is content-rich in vitamins and calcium,” while the latter might describe the contents of a suitcase. As *Gehalt*, content should be seen as essential to what it makes up.

There is no mystery about what the *Gehalt*-objects of Science are; they can be found in the “Table of Contents” of the *Encyclopedia*. This content, like scientific truth itself, is *essentially* text, i.e. not the inherently meaningless natural occurrences of disengaged objectivity, but meaningful discourse. In other words, scientific discourse derives its truth and objectivity from its contents, which are themselves grasped as true and objective discourse. In order to understand the objectivity and truth of scientific discourse (and its contents), I am therefore proposing a certain linguistic notion that I believe is found in Hegel: language

that does not simply reflect what is otherwise “real,” language that does not *refer* to its object, but rather language that actually *is* its object (and content) and is therefore objective and true. The word is truly the thing, but not in the sense of *das Ding*, a common, indeterminate, natural object in a sea of contingency, but rather in the sense of *die Sache*, a more meaningful, content-rich existence. How is this content-rich language possible?

Whether we question a modern-day theoretical physicist or an eighteenth-century empiricist, his or her definition of objective truth in science will involve the adequation of thought and being, of concepts and experience. For example, a subjective theory (thought) takes on objective truth when it can be adequated to reality (being). The adequation of thought and being also lies at the heart of the Hegelian scientific endeavor.

In Hegelian scientific objectivity, however, the adequation of thought and being is *realized* in language, in a language which can therefore be grasped as truth and “objectivity,” in both senses of the word, namely language that is not based on subjective representation, and language which is itself a real object or thing (*Sache*)<sup>8</sup> that is constituted of both thought and being. This language occurs in several different contexts, and each of these expressions forms specific, objective content for Science. The total content of Science thus appears as the true and objective discourses of natural science, subjective and objective spirit, art and religion. This is another way of saying that the Hegelian project, consisting of finding true objectivity in the meeting between (natural) being and the dialectical or negating activity of thought takes place, on the highest scientific or systematic level, in the articulation itself of the *Encyclopedia*. The first part of the work, “The Science of Logic” (thought) and the second, the “Philosophy of Nature” (being) find their truth in the third part, the “Philosophy of Spirit,” whose last word is precisely “Philosophy,” i.e. philosophical discourse itself qua Science.

### True content: The “Name” and the “Word”

A brief passage from the *Encyclopedia*’s “Philosophy of Spirit” helps us understand more precisely the linguistic notion we are dealing with—namely a language that is to be taken as true objectivity, as the realization of thought and being. Here, scientific language is presented as the objective result of a meeting between representing intelligence (thought) and the mere linguistic sign, or “name,” as Hegel puts it (being).

The being <Seiende>, as name <Name>, needs an other <eines Anderen>, meaning from the representing <vorstellenden> intelligence, in order to be the thing <Sache>, true objectivity.<sup>9</sup>

This reference describes scientific discourse at its most formal level, in the context of subjective spirit, where content is supplied by representing intelligence, by understanding.<sup>10</sup> The “name” or sign that is to be inhabited by representational content should be understood as an arbitrary, empty, naturally formed being,<sup>11</sup> open to any “meaning,” just as a certain given name can apply indiscriminately to any individual person. The name, as a singular, naturally formed thing (*Ding*) must indeed be understood as simply found-there by representing intelligence. Here, we are operating at the level of sense-certainty as it is expressed in the *Encyclopedia*, where denomination can never reach beyond the singular appellation of individual objects, i.e. where every object has its name and only its name, which, like the object referred to, is simply found there ready-made, without having been “worked up by intelligence.”<sup>12</sup> What Hegel means by “name” is the senseless externality of the mere, meaningless, arbitrary “sign”<sup>13</sup>—as a being simply found-there and as yet divorced from any signification; the term “word” denotes what Hegel sometimes calls the “representational name,” i.e. the formerly senseless “sign” that is now filled, by intelligence, with the content of representation. In other words, a “name” is not yet a “word.”

This distinction between “name” and “word” can be born out to some degree by Hegel’s statement, in *Encyclopedia* §463, that “names as such” are “senseless words.” This indeed seems to imply that (significant) words are something other than empty, contingent, naturally formed names.<sup>14</sup> Words or “representational names” are richer in content (*Gehalt*) than the empty “names as such” we began with. Intelligence has supplied the latter with representational content and the result already enters the realm of “true objectivity,” what Hegel is calling *die Sache* as opposed to *das Ding*. The point I am making is that “the thing (*Sache*), true objectivity” is still language. It is simply a language which has greater truth and objectivity than the mere empty signs we began with, because now the form of language has taken on content.

In the passage from the “name” to the “word,” we move through two orders of objectivity, from nature to “second nature,” from natural, contingent, impoverished objectivity, to the “true objectivity” of the scientific word. Although this level of objectivity and truth is still relative, in that its content is still representational and therefore still somewhat subjective, it is nonetheless higher than the arbitrary objectivity of the natural world, which can itself be seen as nothing more than an infinite number of meaningless “signs” which



are only *potentially* significant. Far from being truly objective, this world of immediate sense-certainty reflects, in fact, the most radical form of subjectivity. Sense-certainty is a form of *self-certainty*.<sup>15</sup>

Even at the level of discourse that we are currently dealing with in the paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia* under discussion, namely, representational discourse *within* the scientific system, representing intelligence fills the mere “name” to form a significant *word* that should be taken as itself incarnating a certain degree of both objectivity and truth. This scientifically meaningful word is what Hegel is calling “the thing [*die Sache*], true objectivity.”<sup>16</sup> Within the *Encyclopedia* system, the representations expressed should then be taken as more than purely natural or purely subjective and arbitrary; they are determined scientific content that arises, for example, within the natural sciences, and which must be subsequently incorporated into the overall system of science. In other words, the representations expressed in the words of the particular, positive sciences must themselves become part of the total content of philosophical science. In the “Philosophy of Nature” this language obtains in the numerous examples Hegel cites from the natural sciences of his day, for example, in his lengthy exegeses of Mesmer’s findings, or his espousal of Goethe’s color theory. For the natural, positive sciences to become part of the system, their own discourse must be seen as already content-ful and objectively true, although still representational.<sup>17</sup> The above-defined “word” enables us to understand how this is possible. Representing intelligence penetrates nature, as it invests itself in the completely natural names (empty signs) found already there, to produce meaningful words. In fact, that is all representing intelligence can appropriately carry out. Now, however, within Hegelian science, the subsequent pronouncements of representing intelligence can be taken as objectively true, where objectivity and truth are no longer based on the reflection between (natural) “objectivity” on one hand and language on the other.<sup>18</sup>

Although in the context of theoretical intelligence, where the discussion on the “name” arises, we are not yet dealing with systematic philosophical discourse as such, Hegel is telling us that representational discourse, as it arises *within the system*, already possesses a certain degree of true objectivity and objective truth. As the realized result of thought (representing intelligence) and being (the “name”), it is truer and more objective than either, or rather, it combines the hard, natural reality of the name with the abstract essentiality of thought to form something that is truly objective and essential.

Thus, the scientifically significant word appears as the “middle term”<sup>19</sup> between thought and being. It is a particular being which is at the same time thought, or vice versa.

## Scientific grammar: From predication to syllogism

The expression “middle term” indicates that an analysis of the act of predication or judgment alone is not sufficient to grasp Hegel’s concept of scientifically objective discourse; to do so, one must look beyond the proposition to the syllogism, and consider it as a grammatical extension of the act of predication. Failure to do so leads one to concentrate on the relationship between language and thought rather than on the more fundamental relation between being and thought. Failing to grasp language as the objective middle term embodying the two extremes leaves it external to both thought and being. As such, it can do no more than reflect either thought or being, but never actually *be* them. It is only by doing so that language can be considered scientifically objective.

In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel deals with the question of how the subject-predicate form can be grasped as dialectical, in terms of what he refers to as the “speculative sentence.”<sup>20</sup> In this context, the grammatical subject is to be understood as consciousness losing itself in its predicate, which in turn “recoils” back onto the subject in search of a ground. The grammatical subject can thus be seen as an empty name receiving content from its predicate, or as conscious thought determining itself through predication. In both cases, the issue is “the dialectical structure of the proposition” and how the speculative sentence “reflects the fact that, for Hegel, consciousness itself is essentially a dialectical activity.”<sup>21</sup> This seems to show that considering the act of predication in terms of its “dialectical activity” can do no more than provide us with a reflection, where language can provide only an (arbitrary) analogy of thought.

Further, if we consider philosophical language as no more than an accurate reflection of thought, truth comes to depend entirely on the external, and arbitrary judgments of a judicious Hegelian philosopher or an equally subjective “we.” This can sometimes lead to readings where truth in Hegel is viewed as the result of public judgment or a linguistic community of shared reference, à la Wittgenstein.<sup>22</sup> According to my argument, the objective truth of scientific discourse in Hegel depends on neither the insightfulness of individual readers/listeners nor upon general public consensus.<sup>23</sup> Scientific discourse does indeed

become actual (or *wirklich*). However, it is important to understand that its worldly actuality is the result of its objectivity, and not the opposite.

Objective truth remains extremely problematical when a reflective distance is maintained between the language of science and thought, when the relation between the two is merely analogous. In Hegel, this problem arises when scientific discourse is examined *only* in terms of the predicative sentence, even when this is understood speculatively or dialectically.

Commentators concentrating on the *Phenomenology* as the main area of research in their investigations into Hegel's "philosophy of language" are necessarily confined to examining the dialectical workings of the predicative statement. Scientific truth is thus construed as the accurate reflection or adequation between this language (dialectical) and thought (dialectical). This reinforces the misunderstanding I invoked earlier: in order for commentators to discover truth in the relationship between language and the *world*, the latter must also be seen as *inherently* dialectical.

In fact, the scientific inadequacies of the propositional act of predication are revealed through Hegel's later writings on judgment, particularly as they appear in the *Greater Logic*.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, if scientific discourse does indeed imply a notion of objective truth dependent upon meaningful content (*Gehalt*), then the predicative (judgment) form seems inadequate precisely in terms of its inability to hold any content beyond that which is subjectively representational. It seems an argument might be made that Hegel's evaluation of the predicative form, or the form of judgment, undergoes a depreciation over time. From his dialectical or speculative investigations into the copula,<sup>25</sup> which lead to his analysis of the speculative sentence in the Preface of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel comes to see the syllogism as a more appropriate grammatical form in which to grasp scientific expression.<sup>26</sup>

This is borne out by the fact that much of the *Phenomenology*'s "speculative sentence" analysis is taken up again in the *Greater Logic*, however in a context where judgment (predication) appears as the transitional moment between the concept, as an original, immediate, i.e. still un-mediated whole, and the fully developed syllogism, which articulates moments of the universal, the particular and the singular. In fact, Hegel understands judgment "etymologically" as an *Ur-teilen*, the original dividing necessary for the concept to be able to reunite itself, but now syllogistically mediated. Thus, "judgment is the dividing of the concept by itself."<sup>27</sup>

Defining predication in terms of division leaves little room for content, and in the *Greater Logic* Hegel deals specifically with this problem. Real content

can neither be held in the subject nor the predicate, which are related in a purely arbitrary, and, in fact, subjective fashion.<sup>28</sup> “The subject can find itself taken, with regard to the predicate, as the singular with regard to the universal, or again as the particular with regard to the universal, or as the singular with regard to the particular.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, subject and predicate are once again taken as no more than “names,” empty markers, or, continues Hegel in the same passage, “something undetermined that must still obtain its determination.” Hegel’s speculative solution in the *Greater Logic* is to maintain that this determination takes place in neither the subject nor the predicate but in the copula which must become the “filled and determined unity of the subject and the predicate, as their concept.”<sup>30</sup> When the copula is understood in this way, as an existing unity underlying both subject and predicate, the judgment “passes into”<sup>31</sup> the syllogism.

I am insisting on this passage between judgment (predication) and syllogism in order to reinforce my argument about the nature of scientific discourse in Hegel—as language that must be grasped as objective, true, and content-ful (i.e. “filled and determined”); as discourse that must be understood as the existing “middle term” between thought and being, or between subject and predicate. It is this same “middle term” that I invoked above as the significant word in scientific discourse, which Hegel refers to as “the thing [*die Sache*]” or “true objectivity.”<sup>32</sup> Hegel’s analysis of the syllogism should be understood as the “elenchus” of his grammatical analysis of the predicative form. The syllogism expresses the true destiny of the copula, as a mediating, content-ful middle term that determines the two extremes (subject and predicate) in such a way that the whole proposition becomes an objective concept. This is what he means when, referring to the syllogism of necessity, he writes, “In that this syllogism determines the extremes of the concept precisely as totalities, the syllogism has attained [...] its truth, and has thus passed from subjectivity into objectivity.”<sup>33</sup>

Considering the syllogism as the conceptual development of predication allows us to grasp the systematic (scientific) implications of Hegelian language, as presented in that system called the *Encyclopedia*, and to see how Hegel’s notion of objectively true discourse implies a language capable of embodying meaningful content (*Gehalt*). A discussion of Hegel’s notion of scientific language therefore requires an analysis that goes beyond the formal linguistic dimension. This emphasis on content rather than form runs generally counter to how linguistic analysis is understood today. I want to look at a specific instance of how Hegelian scientific discourse can be said to hold objective content.

## The real words of objective spirit

The specific content of Hegelian science that I want to look at is private property, i.e. the first element of what appears as Objective Spirit or the State in the *Encyclopedia*. In dealing with this issue (*Sache*), I am obviously not attempting to exhaust it as a question but merely trying to show how it can be seen to form the objective content of scientific language, content that renders scientific language itself objective, without this objectivity depending upon truth defined as the external adequation between signified and signifier. Property, like any other content of science, must then be conceived as a language that is the objective middle term between being and thought. "Property" is particularly revealing in this light since its objectivity, whether we refer to a house, a field or a horse, strikes us as completely natural and "objective." In fact, it is precisely because of this natural, immediate aspect that the physical thing (*Ding*) of property cannot, as such, become part of scientific discourse. The natural thing has not been mediated (or negated) by thought. We have to see how the discourse of property is more objective than property itself, understood as a simple, natural thing (*Ding*).

Concerning property, Hegel's insight is that it is not truly objective until it passes from one individual will to another. The meaning of this "passing" is neither in the subjective affirmation of possession, in declaring in a purely predicative way that "this is mine," nor in the simple "names" or linguistic signs that immediately represent or reflect this bit of earth, the house, etc. These signs are as natural and impoverished as the things that they reflect. The scientific meaning of property, its true objectivity, the fact that it can become a thing in the sense of *Sache*, is only manifest when it is transferred (sold and bought) from one will to another. This meaning manifests itself<sup>34</sup> in the language of the contract.

Hegel writes: "The interiority of the will that surrenders the property and of the will that receives it is in the realm of representation, and the word is, in this realm, act and thing [*Sache*]..."<sup>35</sup>

The contract must be grasped as a language having an objective existence, both "substantial"<sup>36</sup> and true. This truth is the following: the essence of property is to pass from one will to another; this essence is manifested in the real words of the contract. Thus, we grasp concretely the meaning of the Hegelian idea that essence (*das Wesen*) can be thought of as being that has been (*gewesen*).<sup>37</sup> Only insofar as the purely natural being disappears (is negated or mediated) in

the passage from one will to another can essence emerge. However, rather than dissipating in a “formless tumult of church bells or the warm rising of vapors,”<sup>38</sup> the essence of property is objectified in contractual language, understood as the middle term of a syllogism whose two extremes are natural being and thought (here, in the form of will).

We can understand how the written, consensual contract is a more truly objective representation of property and possession than my simple predication of something as “mine.”<sup>39</sup> When property changes hands, it does so on paper and in writing. Its possession only thereby becomes something objective, “substantial,” and of “value.”<sup>40</sup> It is this objectivity that enables property to be recognized by the persons involved as well as by others, and thereby to effectively participate in the social space of *Sittlichkeit*.<sup>41</sup> I believe the same point of view can be said to apply to other fundamentally linguistic expressions of content within objective spirit: laws, constitutions,<sup>42</sup> and even world history.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to understand what I am arguing here. I am not saying that objective spirit is nothing but text. I am saying that objective spirit must already be objectively true language for it to be part of scientific discourse. Or, from another point of view, for scientific discourse to be objectively true and truly objective, its content must also be objectively true and truly objective. The content of science (which is itself discourse) is language understood as itself content-ful, i.e. as the existing middle term between being and thought. So, if Hegel's science is to incorporate such objective expressions as private property, justice, the state, and world history, these expressions must be grasped as text that is, at least to a certain degree, objectively true/truly objective; philosophical science does not observe natural events, it reads texts.<sup>44</sup> These are considered truer and more objective than what we might be tempted to call the immediate “real” world, which, for Hegel, is merely natural and undetermined, and therefore less real than the world as penetrated (determined) by thought and manifest in meaningful language.

Objective spirit forms one of the main contents of science. I believe the other objects/contents of the *Encyclopedia* should also be seen as objective discourse: the Philosophy of Nature,<sup>45</sup> the contents of Subjective Spirit, Art,<sup>46</sup> Religion,<sup>47</sup> and of course, Science itself. In fact, Science is nothing more than the systematic, speculative articulation of its contents, of its objects—namely the discourses I have mentioned. Science *thinks* the objective truth (or the true objectivity) of its own contents and knows itself to be true and objective. This knowledge is the existing discourse of science, i.e. *logos*.

## The actuality of Science

The idea of true objectivity as essentially linguistic may seem rather bloodless and two-dimensional in that it appears to reduce worldly richness to the words on a page. However, such an objection is based on a notion of language other than the one I have been presenting as Hegel's.

Hegel never denies the world's richness, and we know he enjoyed an enviable social life beyond the sphere of academe. But we must distinguish between scientific objectivity and the world in general. Science deals solely with scientific objects. We are not talking about Krug's pen<sup>48</sup> or any other arbitrary, singular, natural object. Scientific objects are the contents of science. Their names can be found in the *Encyclopedia's* table of contents. They are true and objective discourse.

As objective, they also exist in the world. The objectivity of the contract means that it can be read and recognized by individual wills within the State as *Sittlichkeit*. Similarly, the laws of the City and the constitution itself are *lived* by the citizens, whether litigiously or not. On another level, "international public law"<sup>49</sup> determines, to some extent, the reciprocal activity of States between themselves (i.e. the constitutions, laws, institutions, etc.), and world history is read as the discourse of the discourses of history.<sup>50</sup> In the same way, the linguistic expressions of art and religion *participate* in the life of the City. Once more, however, it is important to recall that it is not because these discourses participate in the world that they are objective, but rather the contrary: it is because these discourses are objective and true that they must manifest themselves as actual (*wirklich*).

What about the actuality of philosophical discourse as such, i.e. of the *Encyclopedia* and the other Hegelian writings? Beyond any worldly participation of its contents, what actuality might scientific *logos* itself have within the City? A plausible response may be found by simply recalling that Hegel spent almost his entire adult life teaching, and that almost all of his texts were conceived as teaching manuals used within the State's education system. So, perhaps, we can say that the actuality of scientific discourse itself, as objectively true *logos*, can be found in its pedagogical application.

## Ironic discourse and the *Vereitelung* of true objectivity

At the beginning of this Intermezzo, I argued against a certain conception of Hegelian objectivity, that of the "world" progressing through its history,

determined by dialectical laws or logic, to an apotheosis of absolute truth. This is a misconception, foremost, because Hegelian philosophy is not concerned with all objectivity, with “all things” as Protagoras may have meant the expression, but with *Scientific* objectivity, i.e. with objectivity worthy of being the object (content) of scientific discourse and therefore capable of sustaining meaningful truth. We are not talking about indiscriminate objectivity of contingent things.

Scientific objectivity is, for Hegel, necessarily linked to a certain idea of scientific discourse, to content-ful language, understood syllogistically as the middle term between being and thought. Non-scientific objectivity has its own language, or rather *is* its own language. As I wrote earlier, Hegel’s personal involvement in Berlin’s teeming world of letters, popular theatre, and journalism shows how far he was from refusing or denigrating such worldly things. However, one must be careful to distinguish this realm from that of Science and to “direct one’s activity and work solely on that area which is worthy of them.”<sup>51</sup> Above all, when the language of non-scientific objectivity is directed *against* Science, against the organic, content-rich discourse of speculative philosophy, its opposition constitutes a threat with necessarily objective repercussions.

This is what Hegel means by irony: “the self-conscious vanitization [*Vereitelung*] of what is objective.”<sup>52</sup> The “evacuation,” “depreciation,” or “rendering vain” of objectivity has thus to be understood linguistically—a fact made clear by the rest of the cited passage, taken from Hegel’s *Review of Solger’s Posthumous Writings and Correspondence*, where Hegel deals with Schlegel, as we saw in the preceding chapter. Irony is first defined grammatically, in terms of what Hegel refers to as the language of judging, a type of critical language that “tears apart [*auseinanderreißt*] the different abstract determinations immediately united in the concrete singularity of the object, and separates them from the object.”<sup>53</sup>

The vanitization that ironic discourse operates on the discourse of true objectivity, on language as the objective middle term between thought and being, sunders the holistic reality of the scientific word. The language of ironic judging is prejudicial to Science because it separates significant content from the words themselves. These become arbitrary reflections, subjective representations or signifiers with no objective significance. The grammatical subject is once again reduced to the status of an empty sign, a sort of name that can predicate anything.

Referring again to the passage from the *Review* of Solger’s work, we can see why Hegel writes, “judging is a decidedly negative tendency against objectivity” and why “such judgments do not take contents into account, but



rather [are] vacuous representations that reject the thing [*Sache*] of religions and philosophies.”<sup>54</sup> The “thing of religions and philosophies” is precisely what constitutes the true content of Science, the doctrines that form the existing middle terms of Science in its syllogistic deployment. In ripping apart these expressions and reducing them to signs on one hand and pure essence on the other, ironical discourse injures Science and the objectivity it implies, or *is*, as objectively true discourse.

Within the conceptual movement that animates Hegel’s system, the divisive force of judgment is the necessary first moment of separation (*Ur-teilen* = original-separating), without which there can be no mediation and reconciliation. However, fixed at the level of ironical discourse, judgment constitutes a divisive force that works as a fixation or a blockage within the organic whole, fragmenting true objectivity into an infinite number of individual things (*Dinge*), simple signs presenting themselves for subjective determination. The language of irony engenders a world radically opposed to the one embodied by the real words of Hegelian Science.

## Novalis

*The internal world is, we might say, more than the external world [...] We would like to live in it completely.*

Novalis

Regarding the question of the Hegel–Novalis relation, research efforts are mainly of two types: those that deal with the possible influence of Novalis on Hegel (analyses based on potential resemblances between the two thinkers) and those taking on the problem of attributing the Hegelian figure of the beautiful soul to Novalis.<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, in his pioneering study on Hegel’s critique of the romantics, Otto Pöggeler does not deal specifically with Novalis, except in an endnote where he explains this absence by claiming that the question would require a broader and deeper treatment than that allowed for by the theme of his work.<sup>2</sup> According to Pöggeler, the relation between Hegel and Novalis can only be studied from the point of view of the *Goethezeit*—a literary period wherein the typical distinction between the classical and the romantic becomes clear. It is not my intention to carry out such an enterprise. Rather, I will proceed in the same way undertaken for Schlegel: based on the analysis of Novalis’s individual particularities which Hegel finds expressed in his work—namely the yearning of the soul (*Sehnsucht*), nobility, sickness, and death, I will elucidate the specific form of irony that Hegel attributes to him. At the end of the chapter, I will explore the question of the beautiful soul and Novalis in order to better understand the speculative dimensions that Hegel finds in the figure represented by this romantic thinker.

### The Novalis distinction

#### Yearning

The name “Novalis” only appears four times in Hegel’s works.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, these references are enough to portray an ironic element that is fundamentally

distinct from that encountered in the Hegelian presentation of Schlegel. As mentioned earlier, the two different ironic expressions discovered in Schlegel and Novalis allow Hegel to grasp Schleiermacher and his theology of feeling as representing an unreconciled hybrid of two unilateral trends.

In Hegel's *Lectures on Esthetics*, Novalis is mentioned within the considerations on "Artistic Beauty or the Ideal," more precisely, in the text under the title "Die schöne Individualität."<sup>4</sup> The specificity of Novalis's ironic expression, over against that of Schlegel, can be clearly seen in the context of artistic creation.

Beginning with a representation of Romantic (i.e. Christian) art as "the smile through the tears," where we find that "tears accompany pain [and] the smile is one of serenity [...] testifying to a calm assurance in spite of the torture and the suffering,"<sup>5</sup> Hegel arrives at "modern" irony. It is in the "rupture" between the serene interior and the painful exterior (a Stoical attitude that refers, in this text, to the story of the Passion) that we find "the first principle" (*Grundsatz*) and the "justification" of modern irony, "to a certain extent, at least."<sup>6</sup> However, as opposed to Romantic or Christian art, modern irony is "on one hand" lacking in all seriousness (the tragedy of the Passion), principally satisfying itself with "inferior subjects,"<sup>7</sup> while, "on the other hand" (*anderseits*), "it ends in the mere yearnings of the inner soul [*Sehnsüchtigkeit des Gemütes*], instead of action and actual being."<sup>8</sup>

Within the differentiation at the very heart of romantic irony itself, the lack of seriousness of the judging subject who posits and destroys (i.e. Schlegel) is distinguished from the subject whose irony is manifested in yearning. It is this yearning (*sehnsüchtig*) side that is applied to Novalis. The text continues:

It is thus, for example, that Novalis, one of the noblest of pure souls [*eines der edleren Gemüter*], who found himself at this point of view, saw himself pushed to the emptiness of all determined interest, to fear of the actual world, and reduced to that consumption, we might say, of the mind [*Schwindsucht gleichsam des Geistes*].<sup>9</sup>

Yearning, as with judgmental irony, is first defined by its relation to external reality. However, unlike that form of irony which can, at least, claim to "act" through its judgments (even if such action is purely negative), the nobility of the yearning inner soul forbids it from lowering itself (*herablassen*) "to action or real production," as if "it were afraid to sully itself by this contact with finitude."<sup>10</sup>

Insofar as it is (generally) defined by Hegel as a self-reflecting, absolute negativity that "destroys all the determinations" that it finds before itself, irony

seems to comprise both the “universal art of annihilation”<sup>11</sup> (aimed not only at what is without value, as is the case with comedy, but also at what is most “excellent and accomplished”), and the yearning inner soul.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, fleeing all reality is a way of denying not only immediate, empirical objectivity but also the genuine, essential objectivity that forms the substantial content of the *logos*. From an esthetic point of view, the absence of all objective content produces only “an inconsistency that has nothing artistic about it [*unkünstlerischen Haltungslosigkeit*]” because the ideal “needs a substantial content”<sup>13</sup> to be represented, in order to manifest itself as a true work of art. According to Hegel, the production of a true work of art must be carried out by the individual subject, but on the condition that this living, artistic individual carries this substantial content within himself or herself and is able to express it. “The individual subjectivity [...] carries in himself a substantial content which manifests itself externally through his agency.”<sup>14</sup> By fleeing all objectivity, the yearning inner soul refuses any possibility for substantial content; his content remains as abstract as the empty core of the ironic subject represented by Schlegel.

Nevertheless, while, in the passages on Schlegel’s ironic expression, such emptiness refers to the vacuity of the vain subject and the “vanitization” undertaken through his judgments, the purely abstract content that Hegel attributes to Novalis retains an aspect of the ideal and the universal. Thus, referring to Schiller’s *Ideal and Life*, Hegel juxtaposes “reality with its pains and its struggles” with “the beauty of the calm land of shadows,” and continues, still referring to Schiller:

This land of shadows is that of the ideal, that of spirits, dead to life in its immediacy, freed from the mediocre needs that natural life is made of, freed from the bonds that kept them tied to external influences, to all the perversions and deformations inseparable from the world of phenomena.<sup>15</sup>

The problem is that “abstract universality,” in order to realize itself in a work of art, “cannot do without taking part in the realm of the sensible,”<sup>16</sup> without which there can be no work of art.

While the *Vernichtungskunst* (which refers to Schlegel) and the *Sehnsüchtigkeit* (which refers to Novalis) both imply an “absolute negation” with respect to substantial reality, their negations operate in different ways. Whereas the negativity of the *Vernichtungskunst* tears essential reality to pieces, into consumable, finite bits through the action of its judgments, *Sehnsüchtigkeit* negates reality by fleeing it. Consequently, although both expressions lack substantial content, the artistic expression of these two types of irony is not the

same. Schlegel's irony, expressing itself in judgments, cannot but constitute a form of vanity wherein subjective depth is understood as desire and "will as power [*Willens als Macht*],"<sup>17</sup> whereas Novalis's *Sehnsucht* expresses subjective depth in terms of "this land of shadows," the ideal in its universality.

The yearning inner soul has no desire turned to the outer world; it has no external "interests." Nonetheless, as pure subjectivity (which Hegel defines, in general, as absolute negativity) it *remains* desire, a desire without external object. That is why in this form of irony we see negativity turned inward, allowing us to comprehend below, the meaning that Hegel lends to *Schwindsucht*, i.e. the "consumption of the mind,"<sup>18</sup> to which Novalis falls prey.

The mental consumption (*Schwindsucht*) brought about by yearning (*Sehnsucht*) results from the self-consumption of the mind, as desire turned inward, against itself.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, in Schlegel, consumption takes the form of subjective irony in the activity of the determining (judging) understanding or in desire through the will. To the extent that the yearning of the noble inner soul has renounced all determination of foreign, empirical, and finite objectivity, for fear of sullyng itself with the finite world, its attitude seems devoid of those aspects of *Herrschaft* and *Meisterschaft* we saw attached to Schlegel's irony, through its association with determinant understanding. The question that arises is the following: if the *Sehnsucht* of the soul that refuses to lower itself to the world is characterized by nobility, how is such a noble figure distinguished from the despotic mastery of *Herrschaft*, as discovered in the Hegelian figure of Schlegel?

### A penchant for nobility

The distinction that Hegel makes between noble mastery and despotic *Herrschaft* is significant in bringing to light Novalis's specificity with regard to Schlegel. The noble lord acts as a master by making others work for him, thus putting them into servitude or slavery. However, the master is not always noble. The difference depends on the dominating power's provenance. The nobleman inherits his power by patrimony whereas the despot ultimately acquires power by having more desire for it than do other, subservient subjectivities. In Hegelian terms, one might say that the subjectivity that accedes to despotic mastery is simply more bourgeois than the other bourgeois. It wants more than do the other individualities, or has more "will as power."

Indeed, Hegel shows a certain consideration for nobility, an attitude that seems apparent in his references to Novalis.<sup>20</sup> The penchant for nobility is

already in evidence in Hegel's early writing on "The Constitution of the German Empire," where his apologetic attitude toward nobility stands opposed to the idea of a government made up of bourgeois. In fact, a bourgeois government represents an element of the understanding (*Verstand*) and thus can be qualified as mechanical, calculating, and bound to natural needs. As H. S. Harris remarks, at the time of writing on the German Constitution (1801–2), "The salvation of the Empire must come from Austria. Prussia (like the French Republic) was a 'modern' State, where all that counted was efficiency, the foresighted calculation of physical necessity."<sup>21</sup> In other words, government by *Verstand*. Hegel writes:

Prussia's modern politics has not proceeded from a kingly majestic principle but from the bourgeoisie, and, in contrast with the Austrian power, for instance, she is now like a bourgeois who has made his fortune toilsomely, penny by penny, by his labor—in comparison with the free nobleman who has inherited wealth, whose income rests on his land [...] His wealth is not a sum [...] but something permanent and unchangeable.<sup>22</sup>

Even if, as we know, work and the bourgeoisie will enjoy a positive reevaluation in Hegel's later writings, particularly in the *Phenomenology* and later in the notion of civil society, nonetheless, the salutary universality of nobility, as opposed to the particularity of the bourgeoisie, remains a constant. This penchant is expressed in the *Philosophy of Right*—in its syllogistic promotion of the Sovereign Prince to the status of the singular universal, as well as in its justification of family patrimony.<sup>23</sup> However, already in the *System of Ethical Life* (1803), which anticipates the *Phenomenology* in this regard, bourgeois work begins to undergo a certain revalorization; it is now considered to be a negation of objectivity that takes place at a higher level than the mere annihilation of the object through noble consumption. Indeed, work is already presented as "the partial positing of intelligence in the object."<sup>24</sup>

The fate of the bourgeoisie, in Hegel, is intimately bound to the destinies of work and desire. Whereas, before 1803, the bourgeoisie is mainly characterized by its appetitive aspect, later, it is its industrious character that is emphasized. In the *System of Ethical Life*, the absolute State, governed by the noble master, clearly prefigures the lord of the *Phenomenology*'s famous "Lord and Bondsman" dialectic. The noble "removes from himself the [working] relations, as well as the virtues that are attached to them, and abandons them to empirical contingency."<sup>25</sup> As "master," the nobleman relates himself to the empirical object through consumption, i.e. by a "pure annihilation [...], an absolute negation."<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, it is important to note that, in the earlier text, the pleasure that the nobleman feels in consuming things is distinguished from that of the “master” in the *Phenomenology*, to the extent that noble consumption is less motivated by need. In the *System*, we read that “Cultivated enjoyment, in that it dissipates the rudeness of need, must seek or prepare what is most noble. [This enjoyment] is idealized, to the purest and most purified degree.”<sup>27</sup>

Such noble lack of appetite is contrasted with the rude appetites of the bourgeoisie, of the modern “enlightened” State, and the grossly empirical, calculating understanding (*Verstand*). Thus, even if the nobleman of the *System of Ethical Life* can be related to the *Herrschaft* of the *Phenomenology* (by his refusal to work and his consumption, although refined, of immediate objectivity), he is nonetheless always distinguished by his opposition to the appetitive aspect of the bourgeoisie: the nobleman is born to his power, which is not the result of a bourgeois desire. In speculative terms, therefore, he is missing the moment of the *Verstand*—the dominating will as power that characterizes Schlegelian *Herrschaft*.

Another question that arises with reference to nobility concerns negativity. Just as the power of the understanding may show itself to be destructive, the same can be said of noble power whose only work is “that of war or an education in light of this work.”<sup>28</sup> The distinction lies in the fact that whereas the destruction carried out by the understanding’s *Herrschaft* is linked to appetite and consumption, the war-like negativity of the nobility is one of “bravura,”<sup>29</sup> a kind of Dionysian destruction, we might say. In fact, the negativity of war clearly acts against the particular interests and appetites of the State as it is characterized by bourgeois understanding, with its activities of efficient possession and consumption. War dissolves the narrowness of these particular interests and reveals them in all their vanity.<sup>30</sup>

If we take seriously the “noble” qualifier that Hegel ascribes to the individuality of Novalis, a certain number of traits appear that allow us to better define his *Sehnsüchtigkeit* as distinct from the bourgeois *Herrschaft* incarnated by Schlegel. We see that the nobleman does not participate in existing reality by working it;<sup>31</sup> if he consumes immediate things, it is not in order to satisfy a particularly strong desire (as seen in the bourgeois despot) but rather for a rarefied, ideal enjoyment; his warrior “work” only shows the vanity of any interest in worldly things. Consequently, the nobleman displays an attitude of disengagement regarding immediate objectivity—an attitude consistent with the absence of the moment of empirical *Verstand*, producer and consumer of phenomena.

This conclusion should not be surprising insofar as, for Hegel (adopting the notion of the understanding found in the subjective idealism of Kant and Fichte), the only possible contact with immediate, empirical objectivity happens through the understanding. Refusing contact with the external world directly implies the absence of this element. Without the moment of understanding, the warrior negativity of *Sehnsucht* (yearning) must be grasped as more radical, more repressed than the negativity expressed through the *Verstand*, which is always externally directed, whether operating as the fiery crucible of the phenomena it produces, as determining outer objects of desire through the will, or as the sundering, positing movement of the concept through initial judgment.

Characterizing *Sehnsucht* through its lack of the moment of understanding, and hence with reference to noble interiority, means defining such yearning in a negative sense with regard to objectivity. A more positive determination of *Sehnsucht* appears with reference to the “inner soul” (*Gemüt*) by which the qualifier of “noble” is explicitly attributed to Novalis.<sup>32</sup>

### A soul without world

It is first in the *Phenomenology*, in a text on the unhappy consciousness, that the articulation between the inner soul and *Sehnsucht* is found. In this passage, the soul is mainly defined as an aspiration toward objectivity that remains beyond reach, and as self-feeling. Although what has happened to objectivity is not immediately obvious, we need only recall that, in this context, the unhappy consciousness appears as the truth of skepticism, the immediately preceding figure. Skepticism is defined with regard to the disappearance of immediate objectivity, i.e. the disappearance of the appearances (*Scheine*) that sophistry maintained in hypocritical self-consciousness, which came to light in the chapter on Schlegel. However, now:

What skepticism causes to vanish is not only what is objective [*Gegenständliche*] as such, but its own relationship to it, in which the “other” is held to be objective and is established as such, and hence, too, its perceiving, along with firmly securing what it is in danger of losing, viz. sophistry, and the truth it has itself determined and established.<sup>33</sup>

The objectivity that resulted from self-consciousness’s “own relationship” with reality, i.e. as determined by the understanding, has now been displaced. It has now disappeared beyond the world, where it remains, as we have seen, only as a thing-in-itself, out of reach of the understanding. Objectivity is now only an



object for feeling, which is fundamentally a self-feeling, and a painful one insofar as it is occasioned by a rupture at the heart of the self.

To be *self*-conscious, consciousness must draw its essence from an otherness that recognizes it; but for skeptical consciousness, such essential otherness remains foreign and inaccessible. Consciousness thus has the feeling of itself but, at the same time, the feeling that its true essence is held elsewhere. Consequently, its yearning seeks to “grasp itself in its essence,”<sup>34</sup> which is unattainable and yet represents its true reality. Insofar as this yearning is necessarily endless, i.e. in that it aims at the thing-in-itself of subjective idealism, which is always beyond its grasp, this yearning is the painful extension of the bad infinity and endless striving (*Streben*) found in the moral philosophies of Kant and Fichte.

The aspiration for essential objectivity that animates the yearning (*Sehnsucht*) in the passage from the *Phenomenology* is further characterized as the “interior movement of the pure soul [*Gemütes*].”<sup>35</sup> This innerness radicalizes the painful nature of yearning, conceived as a rupture within the self. For it is in itself that the self *feels* this ineffable object—this essence (of itself) that always escapes it, as something felt to be both intimate and most foreign. However, the strangeness of the object “beyond” is only as such for the soul. *For us*, the endless striving reveals itself for what it is, a pure self-consumption lacking all true exteriority.

It is the pure soul [*Gemüt*], which for us or in itself has found itself and has satiated itself from within; for although *for itself*, it has the feeling of essence as something removed, this feeling is nonetheless *in itself* [for us] self-feeling. It has felt the object of its pure feeling, and it is itself this object.<sup>36</sup>

It is remarkable that the *Gemüt* appears to carry out (on a transcendental level), “from within” and through feeling, a reflection similar to the one that we saw the hypocritical understanding carry out with regard to the phenomenal world, in Hegel’s critique of Schlegel. The hypocritical understanding is one which has not yet admitted to itself that immediate objectivity is ultimately the projection of its own categories. To the inner soul, “it has not yet occurred to it that its feeling of essentiality is really this self-feeling.”<sup>37</sup> If, indeed, Hegel shows greater indulgence concerning the pure soul, this is because its “hypocrisy” remains an inner feeling devoid of the sophistry that we saw attributed to the critical understanding. The soul seeks and feels the immutable beyond and suffers from its own searching and yearning. It is only when, a few pages further on, in the *Phenomenology*, the soul turns again toward immediate exteriority (in Catholic sensuality<sup>38</sup>), that its workings are again likened to hypocrisy as such.<sup>39</sup> However,

in such actions the soul is already no longer pure and inner. It is a soul tied to an understanding and a will.<sup>40</sup>

The individual who is all soul, in the sense of *Gemüt*, can only feel such a condition as a suffering, the result of being separated from essential objectivity and to feel this separation as a split within himself. Regarding the individuality of Novalis, as presented in Hegel, the inner alienation involved in the state of *Gemüt* actually forms a pathological condition—one that is used to explain the poet's sickness and death as the ultimate expression of his own form of romantic irony.

## Pathological irony

### Sickness of the soul

According to Hegel, Novalis incarnates a terminal form of romantic irony.<sup>41</sup> This ironic form or expression is defined in terms of a psychopathology that is somatically manifested. Indeed, Hegel interprets the death of Novalis (of consumption, in 1801, at 29 years of age) as the ultimate manifestation of a mental illness that results from a pathological relation between his unconscious soul (*Seele*) and his conscious understanding. The pathological state and the death that follows it are not only essential to the individuality of Novalis, as such, but also to his artistic expression, which thus proves to be equally morbid. Consequently, we cannot understand the form of irony that Hegel attributes to Novalis without taking into consideration his pathological individuality.<sup>42</sup>

Hegel's diagnosis is centered on the term *Gemüt*, as discussed earlier. In that context, we saw how Novalis's form of romantic irony was described as the "yearning of the pure soul [*des Gemütes*], instead of action and effective being."<sup>43</sup>

Thus, for example, Novalis, one of the noblest of pure souls [*des Gemüter*] who found himself at this point of view, saw himself pushed to the emptiness of any determined interest, to fear before reality, and driven into this consumption, one might say, of the mind.

The pathological character of *Gemüt* is already announced in Hegel's phrase "consumption of the mind," a sick condition into which Novalis is said to have fallen. In order to understand the pathology of this state, it is necessary to explore a second text, found in the *Encyclopedia's* Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, where mental illness is explicitly discussed. Here, we find developed a psychiatric theory based on the notion of *Gemüt*, which will allow us to comprehend Hegel's

diagnosis of Novalis. This will then allow us to see how the sickness and death of the romantic poet-philosopher comes to constitute, for Hegel, a terminal expression of romantic irony.

The passage on the state of *Gemüt* is found in the Subjective Spirit section of the *Encyclopedia*, where the discussion deals with questions of “anthropology.”<sup>44</sup> Within this framework, considerations on the soul as a fundamental psychical element (*Seele*) allow us to arrive at the pathological state that Hegel refers to as *Gemüt*, which I translate here as “pure soul.” More precisely, by following the *Encyclopedia*’s presentation of the *Seele*, in its development, we will see how the *Gemüt*, which Hegel explicitly attaches to Novalis in the quote earlier, comes to form a specific form of illness. As we will see, this pathological state occurs when an inversion takes place between the normal, healthy roles that are meant to exist between the conscious mind (*der Verstand*, the understanding) and the unconscious soul (*die Seele*).

The soul, as *Seele*, is spirit (mind)<sup>45</sup> in-itself, in the Hegelian sense of the word, i.e. a primordial element, hidden and in potential, where specific particularities have not yet been developed. We are consequently dealing with a moment of the universal. In the soul, as the object of Hegelian anthropology, subjective mind is found in its natural, universal totality, still undetermined in an effective fashion. Within it, the only determination present is confined to natural dispositions or capacities, not yet realized. The three levels of natural determination of the human soul reflect those qualities through which man participates in “the universal life of nature,”<sup>46</sup> as well as the natural changes that occur throughout an individual’s “ages of life,”<sup>47</sup> and lastly, as sensation (*Empfindung*). In these three contexts, the soul is represented as a universal substance, vegetative or passive, and above all, natural. The soul is the “sleep of the mind”<sup>48</sup> —a sleep that is presupposed by the waking of consciousness, Hegel tells us in the section following Anthropology: Phenomenology. However, before raising itself to consciousness, the soul must be apprehended at an intermediary stage, which Hegel calls “the feeling soul [*fühlende Seele*].”<sup>49</sup> This first articulation of the soul will allow us to discover two fundamental elements of subjective mind: the self understood as an (empty) form of pure negativity, and the self as a subterranean unconscious world (*Abgrund*). It is this division within the subject that is potentially pathological.<sup>50</sup>

The “feeling soul” individual is defined as the subjective unity of passive sensibility or as “the simple ideality, the subjectivity of sensibility.” This individual is not “simply natural,” i.e. merely turned toward external sensations but, as a feeling soul, it is “interior.”<sup>51</sup> The Hegelian figure of the feeling soul can

be apprehended as the passive, unifying element of all that has been individually felt. It is what enables the sensed material to be felt *in me*, as mine, even if that which is sensed comes from outside. Thus, the feeling soul is the condition of possibility of all subjective sensible experience. In this regard, it resembles the pure form of time, in Kant, “the immediate condition of the inner phenomena (of our soul), and hence, the mediating condition of external phenomena.”<sup>52</sup> However, although “the simple ideality” in Hegel’s text may resonate with the “transcendental ideality” of Kantian time, Hegel immediately associates such ideality with subjectivity, with the I, which seems to only appear in Kant, with the synthetic unity of apperception—that is, with the “I think” of the understanding that *accompanies* all *my* representations, and resists their dissolution into the diversity of random sensible intuitions. In Kant, the act of synthesizing is what engenders subjectivity as such. The pure form of sensible intuition that is time makes possible all sensation but does not yet guarantee that these sensations are mine. Hegel’s view represents a marked departure from the Kantian conception of subjectivity: for Hegel, the “I” is already present at the preunderstanding level of the soul, i.e. at the level of pure ideality, which is itself nothing other than “the negation of the real.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, although a specific aspect of the Hegelian “I” can be grasped according to the Kantian model of time, as an internal intuition, Hegel’s “I” distinguishes itself through its primordial character of negativity.<sup>54</sup> However, as opposed to the expression of destructive negativity that turns toward external phenomena, and which describes the subjectivity of conscious understanding and its power of determination, here, at the level of the feeling soul, the “real” that is negated by the ideality of the I “is at the same time conserved, virtually retained, although it does not exist.”<sup>55</sup> The feeling soul is where particular subjectivity becomes possible, as a well or *mine* (in both senses of the word) of past experience.

This “real” that is negated and conserved, but without existence, is maintained in all its “infinite richness” within the simplicity of the feeling soul, conceived as “a pit [*Schacht*] without determination.”<sup>56</sup> According to Hegel, this simple interiority forms the unconscious mind of the individual, specific to each of us—a content that remains “conserved” even throughout “all the determinations and mediations of consciousness that are later posited in it.”<sup>57</sup>

This means that later in the development of the Philosophy of Spirit, where consciousness is involved, we can observe how, within conscious selfhood, there remains a whole subterranean, obscure world of “representations, knowledge, thoughts,”<sup>58</sup> which form the substance of its individuality, of its particular soul. Having arrived at conscious selfhood, it is “when it is *I* who recall a representation,

when I extract it from the interior,”<sup>59</sup> that through this subjective act a representation that is *mine* is brought before *my* consciousness. Consequently, at this level, two distinct dimensions of selfhood present themselves: on one hand, the subterranean, unconscious and infinitely diverse world of the “pit without determination,” and, on the other hand, the nihilating subjective form, hungry for content and able to requite itself by turning either inward or outward.<sup>60</sup>

The internal pit of things “forgotten”<sup>61</sup> is not part of man’s “reality,” not part of “his subjectivity as such, but [part of] his being as in-itself.”<sup>62</sup> We are dealing with “simple innerness,” a “simplicity of the soul” that “is first established as the feeling soul.”<sup>63</sup> This primordial element can be thus defined as the unconsciousness, which subsequently develops into the “I” that “recalls” and which “brings *one* representation” before consciousness. However, it must be emphasized that the original I,<sup>64</sup> the unconscious I, will always subsist in order to form the individuality of the conscious I, its own particular soul. Furthermore, the conscious I only comes into being through the act of recalling and representing its *own* feelings, knowledge, and thoughts. These articulations give us a clearer picture of how the concept of the feeling soul will lead to a split at the heart of the subject, where the I as a pure form of negativity comes face to face with itself as with an inner world (that is the feeling soul or its unconsciousness) with which it maintains the same relation of immediacy and alienation that it maintains with the “outer” world of empirical phenomena.

Another aspect of the unconscious-conscious split is essential to seeing how Hegel comprehends Novalis’s pathological state as being both psychical and physical. Although the feeling soul (or the unconscious I) has not yet experienced external difference, which comes from the action of the understanding (through the Philosophy of Spirit’s Phenomenology), the feeling soul nonetheless has the intimate feeling of its own outwardness, i.e. it has the intimate feeling of the outwardness of its own body. This intimate and primordial feeling of its outwardness constitutes its “corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*],” which is “contained” in the feeling soul but without it being yet represented as something “for consciousness and the understanding,” i.e. not yet as a “materiality whose elements are external to each other and external to the soul.”<sup>65</sup> The corporeality of the soul remains something purely felt and immediate. In Hegelian terms, the feeling soul is thus the pure concept or the “in-itself” of the human being, the still undifferentiated moment that is already pregnant with its difference. This self-differentiation will only happen (will become for-itself) through the agency of the representing understanding. What is most important to retain here is the idea that the simple individuality of the feeling soul contains

immediately, within itself, its own undifferentiated difference. This difference *in potentia* stems from the fact that the individuality is at once both feeling and felt; feeling soul and felt corporeality; body and soul. The complicity, at the anthropological level, between body and soul is ultimately grounded in the essentially natural character that they share.<sup>66</sup> It is this common character that will allow us to comprehend how, in Hegel, a mental illness proves to also be physical, and how the consumption of mind in Novalis must also manifest itself as consumption of the body (tuberculosis). I will return to this corporeal aspect of Hegel's diagnosis, but first it is necessary to understand the theory of mental illness underlying the state of *Gemüt*, which, as we saw, Hegel attributes to Novalis.

Although there does, of course, exist a healthy relationship between the understanding (the conscious I) and the feeling soul, where the latter is conceived as a well or mine from which the understanding may recall representations, sensations, facts, thoughts, etc., this relation seems persistently haunted by the spontaneous resurgence of "sickly states of mind,"<sup>67</sup> where one "truer form of mind [exists] in a more subordinate form."<sup>68</sup> In fact, Hegel's claim is even more radical: the degree of mind (*Geist*) that is the soul is only available for us to comprehend (is only *for-us*) to the extent that it constitutes "a state [*Zustand*]" into which the development of the soul, having already attained, in its subsequent determination, consciousness, and understanding, may once again fall."<sup>69</sup> In other words, the unconsciousness is only adequately presented to us through the study of pathological states that can be seen as regressions: specifically, states into which the soul that has already reached the level of consciousness "may once again fall." It is only through the explanation of a pathological mental state that Hegel is able to come up with what constitutes the normal, healthy development of subjective spirit, just as Freud's study of neuroses allows him to develop a theory of normal psychological structures. Of course, once established, such a theory can be applied to particular cases, as with Hegel's diagnosis of Novalis.

### **Genesis of a pathological condition**

In order to present his theory of normal mental development and the possibility of regression into the state of *Gemüt*, Hegel utilizes two key concepts: judgment and genius. Within Hegel's theory, each of these terms is lent a precise technical meaning, beyond its common language acceptance. In fact, it is only through the specific determinations of these terms that the articulations of the Hegelian theory of psychogenesis become understandable.

First, concerning judgment, we must rediscover the etymological meaning that Hegel attributes to the substantified verb *Urteilen*. Perhaps inspired in this by Hölderlin's reading of the term, Hegel goes beyond the traditional, logical sense of the word, where judgment is synonymous with an act of predication between a grammatical subject and a predicate, which takes place through the copula "is." Rather, "judgment" is now grasped as an original partitioning off or sharing out, an *Ur-teilen* (*teilen* = to share).<sup>70</sup> For Hegel, as for Hölderlin (and for Schelling), the original "sharing out" of judgment is not only logical but ontological, since "it necessarily presupposes a whole of which the subject and the objects are parts."<sup>71</sup> This presupposed whole is expressed in the copula "is," which expresses the real existence, the *being* of this bond between subject and object. In fact, according to the speculative meaning that Hegel gives judgment, the grammatical subject "lets itself go" (*sich entlasst*), or posits itself in the predicate in order to determine it. Using a paradigmatic example, in the proposition "God is the all-powerful," the subject "God" lets itself go into the predicate "the all-powerful," determining it as actually existing, a fact that is presupposed in the copula "is," which expresses the *existing*, speculative unity of the divine subject and its predicate. In other words, allowing us to grasp the use Hegel makes of the term in the present context, judgment must be taken ontologically, where the grammatical subject is also the subject in the sense of the I that posits itself into existence.<sup>72</sup>

The term "genius" must also be grasped in a technical sense, one that goes beyond the common reference to artistic or intellectual talent. In fact, Hegel's definition of genius, here, picks up on an antiquated meaning of the word: a divinity present at birth, which accompanies a person during his life, influencing his fate. Let us look at how Hegel uses these two terms, "judgment" and "genius," in order to explain normal psychological development as well as the possibility of pathological regression, as he finds it in Novalis.

Hegel discovers the origin of normal psychological development in the "original sharing [*Urteilen*]" that is carried out between the pregnant mother and her foetus. Reference to judgment means that the mother fills the role of a substantial subject, one who determines her foetus just as the grammatical subject determines its accidental predicate. We are truly dealing with an *Ur-teilen* or an original sharing out that presupposes the primordial unity of the two elements, while also recognizing that this unity is "pregnant" with the division to be carried out from within. The primal relation between mother and foetus, Hegel tells us, is "neither corporeal nor simply spiritual but psychical,"<sup>73</sup>—meaning an immediate, mute relation taking place at the level of the feeling soul.

The bond of original predication that exists between the substantial mother-subject and the foetus-predicate is qualified by Hegel as “magical.” It is neither a “communication” nor simply a bond that is “sensible and material” but rather an immediate sharing. The ambiguity of the mother-foetus relation is based on the fact that “these are two individuals, and yet still in an undivided unity of the soul.”<sup>74</sup>

The term “genius,” here, is first attributed to the mother, who is described as being the *genius* of the foetus. In Hegel’s own terms, genius is thus defined as “a self-ish totality of spirit [*die selbstische Totalität des Geistes*], in so far as it exists *for itself* and forms the subjective substantiality of another.”<sup>75</sup> At the moment of original sharing (judgment), the mother is the genius because she is the subjective substance that determines the accidental predicate (her foetus). In fact, the substantiality of the mother stems from her fully realized individuality, from her “complete totality of being, of life, of character [...] as real activity and active manifestation, as concrete subjectivity.”<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, the foetus within the mother is only “mere possibility or capacity or in-itself.”<sup>77</sup> Putting this in Aristotelian terms, which seem particularly called for here, we might say that the mother is presented as the entelechy, in act and substantial, i.e. as the *soul* of the foetus, which is *in potentia*.

However, breaking with the ancient reference, it is apparent that Hegel considers the magical (metaphorical?) action of the mother-subject upon the foetus-predicate as a kind of genetic sharing, where “the feminine nature”<sup>78</sup> is “primitively taken into [the foetus],” and through which “dispositions to sickness, as well as other dispositions concerning shape, sensibility, character, talent, idiosyncrasies, etc.”<sup>79</sup> are distributed in him. In this way, the mother is originally the “genius” of the child. It is her nature that determines the natural fate of the foetus within her. Nonetheless, it is crucial to grasp the dialectical nature of the mother-child relation: there will be a healthy reversal where the child, at first determined by the maternal genius, will subsequently raise himself to consciousness in order to become, himself, “the rational genius, self-conscious, determining.”<sup>80</sup> In other words, the qualifier of “genius,” defined as a determining substance, will pass from the mother to the child, now having become rational and conscious through habitual training and education. In this way, the child progressively pulls away from maternal (natural) determination and becomes increasingly oriented toward the more paternal spirit. Furthermore, according to its normal development, what the rational genius of the child will determine is precisely “the substantial material that is only in-itself,” i.e. the maternal nature transmitted to him when he was determined by the mother. The



substance-subject that was the mother of the foetus is then incorporated into the child, where this maternal aspect is now determined as a predicate of the rational subject. This predicate (feminine nature) is the soul of the conscious being; further, it has become the unconscious mine (*Schacht*) that we encountered in the feeling soul.

The soul, even fully determined by the rational genius of the I, remains, as we have seen, “different from the unfolding existence of its consciousness, of the representation of the world, interests, desires, etc.”<sup>81</sup> We have also seen how this difference or split within the I, which is taken as both a *form* of negativity that is hungry for content, and as the unconscious soul (inner *content*), may bring about a pathological state. Indeed, in the pathology of psychical regression, it is the unconscious soul that reclaims the lost role of the maternal determining genius, i.e. the role that was originally claimed by the mother-substance-subject but which had then passed on to the “rational” child in its spiritual development.<sup>82</sup>

This state of affairs is clearly pathological, for it is self-consciousness, “that mediated, reciprocal externality,” which is supposed to be, in the healthy rational being, the determining genius, the one that determines the unconscious soul. The opposite movement, which consists of taking the unconscious soul for the genius, for substantial subjectivity, and taking conscious understanding for the accidental and determinable predicate, brings about the manifestation (*Erscheinung*) of a pathological state. This sickly state is precisely what Hegel calls, in the text from the Anthropology section, “Gemüt!”<sup>83</sup> Consequently, we see how the state of *Gemüt*, which Hegel applies to Novalis in the passage from the *Lectures on Esthetics* presented above, where Hegel calls him “one of the noblest of pure souls [*eines der edleren Gemüter*],”<sup>84</sup> is far from being a mere epithet used to describe a romantic sensibility. Novalis’s condition, according to Hegel, should be seen as a real psychiatric illness, in a precise theoretical sense.

The “consumption of the mind” (*dieser Schwindsucht gleichsam des Geistes*) that characterizes the Novalis case, according to the passage from the *Lectures on Esthetics*, is not an accidental pathological condition that simply happened to the poet-philosopher but the reality itself of his status as *Gemüt* (pure soul). We are dealing with a state that occurs as the result of a rational being’s regression to an earlier stage, where the unconscious soul determines the understanding (*Verstand*) in the same way that the mother determines her foetus.

The understanding represents the mental faculty that is mainly turned toward the outer world and thus forms the first opening to real action and actuality. The healthy understanding may draw upon the memories and “forgotten” representations that make up an individual’s own being or inner soul. However,

this unconscious mine (*Schacht*) “without determination” must not itself become the determining genius of the conscious understanding. When such an inverted condition comes about, external objectivity disappears, and the subject, alienated from the world, turns inward, drawing primarily upon its unconscious soul. Consequently, we see how the I, as a pure form of negativity or desire, then becomes the consumer of an internal content, one that is in fact nothing but another dimension of itself. The inwardly directed self, determined by the genius of the soul, thus falls prey to a (self-)consumption: the *Sehnsucht* and the *Schwindsucht* that Hegel diagnoses in Novalis.<sup>85</sup>

We must comprehend the *Gemüt*’s yearning, as it is applied to Novalis in the *Lectures on Esthetics*, for what it is: pure subjective negativity, i.e. the radical negativity of subjectivity, but in a movement that might be likened to an inward-directed sublimation. In fact, such subjective negativity can only turn inwards since all external otherness, available through the understanding, has disappeared.<sup>86</sup> In Novalis’s “consumption of the mind,” subjective negativity is applied to itself.

The corporeal character taken on by Novalis’s psycho-pathological condition, i.e. the consumption that kills him, is more than a mere metaphor for the emptiness implied by the yearning (aspiration) of *Sehnsucht*.<sup>87</sup> According to Hegel’s anthropology, a pathological fixation rooted in the depths of the soul must manifest itself physically. Novalis’s consumption of the mind had to spread to his body. This is because, as we saw earlier, the subjective and objective unity, which will ultimately come to form the substantial, mediated relation between the self and its world,<sup>88</sup> is already present, in an immediate fashion, at the level of the human soul, in the intimate feeling of one’s own body: that objective thing that is, at the same time, me.

The disturbance of the mind must be essentially grasped as a sickness, at the same time, both mental and corporeal, for the reason that here reigns a unity of the subjective and the objective that is still entirely immediate, which has not yet passed through infinite mediation [...]—this feeling has, consequently, the figure of a being, and thus is something corporeal.<sup>89</sup>

According to this point of view, the fact that Novalis died of consumption should be understood with regard to the immediate (unmediated through otherness) relation between the soul and its corporeality, its self-feeling.<sup>90</sup> The essence, or rather the existing meaning *for us* of the pathological state taking place in the *Sehnsucht* of the *Gemüt* is fully and finally revealed in the death of the individual who is “pure soul.” To the extent that the romantic individual configures himself

into a work of art, i.e. to the extent the romantic artist makes his life his work, the death of Novalis *is* his ultimate and essential artistic expression. According to Hegel's reading, the death of Novalis presents itself as the terminal form of the esthetics of romantic irony.<sup>91</sup>

### The art of sickness

We have seen how the state of *Gemüt* is characterized by a radical solipsism where all content for the self proves to be entirely subjective. All content comes from within, at the expense of objective, external relations that are mediated by the understanding (*Verstand*). Indeed, the healthy understanding represents subjectivity's opening to the world, through which the "subject reflects upon himself,"<sup>92</sup> attains consciousness, i.e. a consciousness of the self through otherness and others. When all content comes from within, the individual, in his self-consumption, cuts himself from objectivity and hence from participation in the actual life of the world, which Hegel sees as the life of spirit, namely the organic state, its history, culture, and Science.<sup>93</sup> From this point of view, Novalis is "pushed to the vacuity of all determined interests, to fear before reality."<sup>94</sup> In its ultimate expression, fixation in self-consumption is the negation of all objectivity, and the purely natural death of the individual, cut off from the world and therefore from the *life* of spirit.

This lack of all objective content ensures that the artistic works produced by the yearning pure soul can only attain "an inconsistency that is intrinsically unartistic."<sup>95</sup> Regarding the work of art of *Sehnsüchtigkeit*, Hegel goes as far as to question its very existence. Indeed, because the yearning soul is cut off from the world, it is hard to imagine it producing anything, let alone true works of art: "it does not consent to lower itself to the level of real activity and productivity, in fear of sully itself through contact with the finite world."<sup>96</sup> All art necessarily involves working with external material, and implies a certain aspect of craft or workmanship. "All art is exerted on a more or less dense material, more or less resistant, that one must learn to master."<sup>97</sup> Novalis, as "one of the noblest of pure souls,"<sup>98</sup> can consequently only produce artwork that is defective and insignificant.<sup>99</sup>

Of course, the artist accomplishes more than pure craft or the skilled working on external material. First, still on a purely technical level, the artist's training must include what Hegel calls an anthropological element. Indeed, "better the artist knows the depths of the soul and the human mind, the higher is the level that he may attain to."<sup>100</sup> However, we must not confuse the fact

of “knowing”<sup>101</sup> the depths of the soul with remaining immersed in them. For the goal of the artist, as anthropologist, is directed toward the outer world: the better he knows the soul, the better he is able to make his work resonate in the souls of others. Furthermore, the anthropological apprenticeship of the artist is not solely based on introspective and immediate visions but must be carried out through the intermediary of the understanding, i.e. through “a study,” not only of the inner but the outer.

This knowledge [of the depths of the soul and mind] is not acquired [...] directly but follows from a study of the outer world as well as the inner world.<sup>102</sup>

Such a study “furnishes [the artist] with the subjects of his representations,”<sup>103</sup> i.e. a substantial content for the art. However, even if we leave aside this question of artistic subject matter, Novalis, as an artist of *Sehnsucht*, is doubly excluded from any possibility of actual artistic production: insofar as he renounces his understanding (*Verstand*), he renounces any effective representation for his public; insofar as he refuses to sully himself with the finite world, he renounces work on the actual material, that which makes art a *work* of art.

In his art, as in his life (i.e. in his sickness and death), Novalis expresses, according to Hegel, an encompassing refusal of genuine objectivity, a negative attitude that falls under the definition of romantic irony as a “vanitization [*Vereitelung*].” Indeed, Novalis’s art proves to be the ultimate affirmation of “the vanity of all that is substantial [*Sachlichen*], ethical [*Sittlichen*] and that possesses genuine content [*Gehaltvollen*], of the nullity of all that is objective [*Nichtigkeit alles Objektiven*] and positively worthy.”<sup>104</sup> According to Hegel, the subjective individuality of Novalis, in his sickness and death, constitutes the most radical expression of irony: the total disappearance of the world and the self.<sup>105</sup>

## The beautiful soul and unhappy consciousness

### Modalities of the beautiful soul

I have been uncovering the specific nature of Novalis’s individuality, according to Hegel, particularly his pathological state of *Gemüt*, and the terminal character of this condition as an ironic expression. In this light, Novalis’s death represents his definitive work of art. Such a reading involves taking death as something more than the purely natural end of the living individual, making it the object of philosophical reflection, through which it may become a moment in the story of spirit. This is what Hegel is attempting to do by making Novalis’s death

a significant expression of irony. I believe Hegel's goal here is to incorporate the terminal character of romantic irony into the systematic movement of Science. He attempts this in two ways: first, by considering terminal irony as a form of anesthetic respite from the pain of unhappy consciousness; second, by considering it as the provisional end point of a specific dialectical movement. It is in this latter sense (*for us*, Hegelian philosophers) that Novalis appears as a beautiful soul. On the other hand, for Novalis himself, as an individual unhappy consciousness living in *Sehnsucht*, death can mean no more than the cessation of pain and suffering—a quietus that subtracts him from the movement of spirit, whose motor is the very pain and unhappiness that death is meant to end.

First, I would like to examine the figure of the beautiful soul as it appears in three contexts, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These references evoke three provisional end points in the dialectical course of the work's movement. Then, I will show how these points are moments of relief for unhappy consciousness. This will allow us to examine the essential ambiguity in the painful yearning that Hegel finds in Novalis, i.e. how this suffering and its relief can represent both the unhappiness that moves the spirit toward the ultimate satisfaction of absolute knowing, and the end of that yearning in the natural death of the romantic individual. The ambiguity between the systematic, absolute dimension of the beautiful soul and its incarnation in the suffering individual further accentuates all that appears equivocal in Hegel's grasp of Novalis, as we saw earlier with regard to the question of nobility.

In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, we find the following sentence: "This yearning of a beautiful soul is presented in the writings of Novalis."<sup>106</sup> As I wrote in the Introduction, it is impossible to attempt to unilaterally and exclusively attribute the Hegelian figure of the beautiful soul to Novalis. However, as we see in this quote, for Hegel, the writings of Novalis are the presentations (*Darstellungen*), *for us*, of something called a beautiful soul and its yearning for something solid (*nach einem Festen*). In other words, besides all the other possible attributions of the figure of the beautiful soul, Hegel uses it to define the romantic individuality of Novalis. Nonetheless, I believe that a brief examination of several references to the beautiful soul, within the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, will help us further understand the essential ambiguity in the terminal character Hegel assigns to the figure of Novalis, i.e. its natural end in sickness and death, as well as an absolute dimension, where it appears in the context of absolute knowing, at the end of the *Phenomenology* itself.<sup>107</sup>

It is tempting to comprehend the appearances of the beautiful soul in the *Phenomenology's* chapter on "Morality" in terms of an overall movement through which its first manifestation moves on to absolute knowing.<sup>108</sup> Seen this way, the beautiful soul can be seen as traversing intermediary moments of hypocrisy and judgment, i.e. instances of Schlegelian understanding, as well as a second appearance in the section on "the hard heart."<sup>109</sup> In fact, these first two appearances of the beautiful soul already represent endings: a terminal character that we have seen associated with the Hegelian figure of Novalis, and which is explicitly related to him, as a beautiful soul, in the Heidelberg *Lectures* on Conscience.<sup>110</sup> In this light, the first appearance of the beautiful soul, in the *Phenomenology's* Morality chapter, can be seen as representing the end of the preceding movement—"the evaporation" or "the dying echo" of that discourse (*Rede*) that takes place in the language of conviction.<sup>111</sup> It would therefore seem erroneous to claim that the form of absolute knowing that appears at the end of "Conscience," in the Morality chapter, represents the attainment of some higher form of knowledge called the beautiful soul, taken as a new, higher figure of consciousness. On the contrary, such knowledge only happens to the extent that the beautiful soul is conceived as finished.

The second reference to the beautiful soul in the Morality chapter can be found in the context of "the confession" and is comprehended in the relation between two self-consciousnesses: one who expresses himself in his discourse and who is revealed as hypocritical; the other who remains within his mute self-feeling. Although the first confesses "openly, to the other,"<sup>112</sup> his confession is not recognized by the "hard heart," which repulses him. At first glance, the beautiful soul seems to be the hard heart of the confessor, who, in his muteness, repulses the confession of the hypocritical consciousness. However, on closer examination, it seems apparent that the beautiful soul only represents the culmination, the end of the hard heart, and in this context reappears before, again, disappearing.

The beautiful soul, deprived of reality, in the contradiction of its pure selfhood and the necessity for this self to come out of itself into being [...], in the immediacy of this fixated opposition [...] is sundered to the point of madness and dissipates in yearning consumption.<sup>113</sup>

The consumption (*Schwindsucht*) in question is the same illness that was attributed to Novalis, in his condition of *Gemüt*. Here, again, the condition proves mortal, for its result (like the corpse) is purely natural, what Hegel describes, in the same passage, as "the spiritless unit of being."<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, the death of the hard heart brings about the "abandonment" of the "hard persistence of his

being-for-self”<sup>115</sup>, an abandonment through which spirit (essence) is liberated. Thus, death, liberator of spirit, is presented as a dissolving power over against the hard “self-ish” moment of the *for-itself*.

On its side, the consciousness that confesses also “renounces” the “hardness of the being-for-self”; it comes to know the universal life of spirit: “that which rejects its reality and suppresses itself, is thus presented as universal.”<sup>116</sup> In dialectical terms, i.e. to return to the interplay between the two opposing consciousnesses, one that confesses its evil and the other who is essentially mute, it is from their reciprocal recognition of the universality of the other, “the universal knowledge of oneself in one’s absolute opposite,” that the “Yes of reconciliation”<sup>117</sup> may take place, “a reciprocal recognition that is the absolute spirit.”<sup>118</sup> Consequently, it would be wrong, in this second Phenomenological context, to attempt to attach the figure of the beautiful soul to one of these two consciousnesses. It is neither the hard heart of the confessor nor the consciousness of evil that confesses. The beautiful soul represents the end of one as it does of the other, the end of their unilateral selfhood, the negation through which death, as the fluidifying agency of the “for-one-another”<sup>119</sup> moment, comes to dissolve the hard fixity of the *for-itself*.<sup>120</sup>

In the Morality chapter of the *Phenomenology*, the two appearances of the beautiful soul represent as many endings: the first time, at the end of the good conscience, as its evaporation in the dying echo of its empty discourse; the second time, as the end of the judging consciousness’ hard heart. In the chapter on Morality, the beautiful soul only participates in absolute knowing to the extent that it “gives up the ghost” (its universal essence), i.e. to the extent that it expires.

Finding itself at the culmination of these two dialectical movements is not something imposed upon the beautiful soul from the outside. Because it is pure subjectivity ( $I = I$ ), the beautiful soul is itself pure dialectical negativity, taken as a specific moment in the movement of the concept. This moment, which appears to us as the “for-another,” is evanescence itself, the dialectical power of the negative that animates the movement of thought. Whereas, in the figure of the beautiful soul, this movement is stalled, fixated, and thus represented as dying, on the other hand, *for us* (i.e. for Hegelian philosophers), the endings of the beautiful soul, in these two appearances in the *Phenomenology*, take place in the progression of consciousness toward the knowing of absolute spirit. At the end of moral conscience’s movement, this knowing, “universal knowing of oneself in one’s absolute opposite,” is presented in terms of a religious community, one that arises in the “Yes!” of reconciliation: knowledge of true objectivity in its immediate concreteness.<sup>121</sup>

Since we are, at the end of the Morality chapter, dealing with (moral) consciousness, absolute knowing is still expressed in the context of selfhood. However, here, the I is articulated in speculative terms: self-identity is that of identity and difference, and subjective self-certainty takes on a degree of objective truth as the existence of the speculative I, “which, in its complete alienation and in its complete opposite has its certainty of itself.”<sup>122</sup> In the density of language that is characteristic of those moments when Hegel evokes the absolute, the existence of the speculative I (whose self-identity includes difference) is expressed as “God manifesting Himself among those who know themselves as pure knowing.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, God is objectively manifest; He is as an objectivity that is at the same time an I. This *revelation* takes place neither in the “no” (the absolute negativity) of the beautiful soul nor in the “either, or” of the categorizing subjectivity of the understanding, but simply in the “Yes” of a real community of self-consciousnesses recognizing one another. This recognition is that of true objectivity, an immediate knowledge that is both the subject and the object of its knowing, and, as such, is absolute.<sup>124</sup>

### **The absolutely beautiful soul**

At the end of the *Phenomenology*, absolute knowing reappears, now presented as “the knowledge that spirit has of itself.”<sup>125</sup> Surprisingly, in this ultimate context of the work, this knowledge, as the “simple unity of the concept,” is attributed to the figure of the beautiful soul, i.e. to “a particular figure of consciousness.”<sup>126</sup> However, here, rather than expressing the moral truth of individual selfhood, as taking place in a specific community of believers, “the beautiful soul is the knowledge that *spirit* has of itself in its pure, transparent unity.” Having stressed the terminal character of the beautiful soul, which is fittingly appropriate to the terminal individuality of Novalis, we now find ourselves in the presence of the beautiful soul as the ultimate, absolute form of knowledge, i.e. spirit’s self-knowing, toward which the concept has moved, in all its speculative unfolding. In this context, we are fully confronted with the ambiguous nature of the beautiful soul (and Hegel’s reading of Novalis), i.e. to the question of how it can represent both a terminal form of individual consciousness and the goal of spirit’s self-knowing. Hegel offers a possible response.

In that this concept holds itself opposed to its realization, it is the unilateral figure whose disappearance in an empty mist we have witnessed, but whose positive alienation and progress we have also seen.<sup>127</sup>



In other words, to the extent that the beautiful soul remains fixated in the moment of the for-itself, a fixation that expresses the pathological state of *Gemüt*, it disappears, but to the extent that it comes out of this state and experiences a “positive alienation,” it participates in the progression of spirit’s self-knowing.

The figure of consciousness known as the beautiful soul seems to be defined in the same way we apprehend the recovered moment that occurs as the intuition of absolute knowledge: the simple unity of the concept, “a pure degree of abstraction that is pure being or empty nothingness.”<sup>128</sup> However, unlike the intuition that spirit immediately has of itself as absolute, having recovered itself, now mediated through all the forms of consciousness in which it has recognized itself, the simple unity of the concept that is the beautiful soul as an individual consciousness remains fixated as an individual being-nothingness. In this way, the individual soul remains “an intuition of the divine” rather than “the self-intuition of the divine.” This intuition of the divine that takes place in the consciousness “without object,” who is fixated “obstinately on itself,”<sup>129</sup> is the absolute certainty of itself, and, as such, is a “consciousness of emptiness.”<sup>130</sup> Because this emptiness is universal, a pure, undetermined essentiality, it is confused with “the divine” in all its universal abstraction. If this consciousness does not actualize itself, does not progress in the movement of the concept, it “collapses into itself,” it “drowns” in its own universality, understood as “absolute self-consciousness.”<sup>131</sup> Its intuition of the divine is manifested as a vision, like those that may arise while in the state of *Gemüt*.<sup>132</sup>

The ambiguity of the figure of the beautiful soul stems from the fact that it represents, at the same time, the consciousness that is sunk in the intuition of its own universality, as “I = I,”<sup>133</sup> and the same intuition, at the absolute level, in spirit. In the first instance, the beautiful soul is defined as a culmination, a fading away into nothingness.<sup>134</sup> As such, the beautiful soul experiences the same end as that we saw in Novalis’s terminal state of *Gemüt*. Conversely, insofar as the beautiful soul represents the self-knowing of spirit, it appears as the very soul (animus) of the concept’s movement, the universal intuition that is found both at the end and at the beginning of a circular journey, through which the self-intuiting of the divine is deepened and rediscovered as an internalized remembering (*Erinnerung*).<sup>135</sup> As an expression of irony, in the terminal state of *Gemüt*, the beautiful soul does not participate in this movement. Its end does not go beyond that of natural death. Its essence evaporates in the natural dispersal of its elements.<sup>136</sup>

The end of the ironic beautiful soul that evaporates into nothingness may invite us to consider its ambiguous opposite: the image of absolute knowing

found at the end of the *Phenomenology*, of the chalice foaming forth “from this realm of spirits,” an infinite self-realization that occurs to absolute spirit in its self-knowledge, as the beautiful soul in all its Schillerian ideality,<sup>137</sup> and which will form, from the compressed unity of that fully realized intuition, the point of departure for the *Logic*.

### The unhappy consciousness and its relief

The *Sehnen*, the striving that lies at the heart of *Sehnsucht*'s yearning, finds its source in the painful contradiction between essential objectivity and subjective emptiness. In fact, the pain is nothing other than the subjective desire to unite with objectivity and be satisfied in it. The path of the *Phenomenology* consists in reconciling with objective contents that are increasingly substantial. Each figure produces its satisfaction, the fulfillment derived from unification with otherness, but each time, the pain of separation resurfaces. The ultimate satisfaction of absolute knowing only occurs when the truest objectivity is realized, where subjectivity fully recognizes itself in its own story, where subjectivity is most substantial, and which it had taken for otherness. Given the absolute demands of total satisfaction or fulfillment, it is not surprising that the most radical expression of this suffering at the heart of *Sehnsucht* should be expressed in religious terms, as “the unhappy consciousness's painful feeling that God Himself is dead.”<sup>138</sup> For the only time when worldly objectivity was immediately and absolutely true, where subject and substance were one, was when Christ walked “among us.” The disappearance of the Man-God from the world represents the loss of essential truth, leaving behind the husk of an empty objectivity, to which corresponds, phenomenologically, the yearning emptiness of particular consciousness.<sup>139</sup> The unhappy consciousness internalizes the separation between its lack of true content and (absent) essential objectivity. Thus, within it can be found “at the same time, immutable essence and its own particular existence,”<sup>140</sup> an opposition instantiated in the form of an infinite suffering that is engendered by the infinite separation between the universal and the individual. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*, at the beginning of the chapter on Religion, the ultimate figure of self-consciousness in its unhappy form is, in truth, “nothing other than the pain of spirit struggling to raise itself again to objectivity but without attaining this objectivity.”<sup>141</sup>

This same *spiritual* suffering may bring about the condition of *Sehnsüchtigkeit* that we found in the beautiful soul as well as in the figure of *Gemüt*, both of

which Hegel uses to describe the individuality of Novalis. In this sense, we can say that the two figures are particular expressions of the unhappy consciousness of spirit itself, struggling to regain true objectivity.<sup>142</sup> This spiritual dimension of unhappy consciousness is expressed in the Revealed Religion section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where we find the following passage:

The pain and the yearning of the unhappy self-consciousness penetrating all these figures [of spirit] and constituting their centre; they are the shared pain of [spirit's] birth, coming to light,—the simplicity of the pure concept that contains these figures as its moments.<sup>143</sup>

However, to the extent that they are only particular figures of consciousness, neither the *Gemüt* nor the beautiful soul are allowed the satisfaction, indeed the ecstasy of which only spirit proves worthy, at the end of its *Phenomenological* odyssey.<sup>144</sup> The only way in which particular consciousness may experience definitive relief from the pain of its unhappy condition is to be no longer conscious, i.e. to no longer be what it is not and thus to simply be. However, for Hegel, to simply *be* is the fate of finite things qua natural and hence to be destined to a purely natural death. For, as Hegel makes clear in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, what makes consciousness what it *is* is precisely that it is always also what it is not, the fact that it is never at rest, that it continually does itself violence and spoils its limited satisfactions.<sup>145</sup> It is this unhappiness that pushes consciousness to always seek to know itself in ever-richer forms of objectivity, and thus to participate in the movement of spirit.

Contrarily, *Sehnsüchtigkeit*, stuck in self-consuming self-satisfaction, feeds only on itself, consumes only itself as its sole object. Thus, its ultimate relief can only come from its own disappearance. For, in “that which is dead, there is neither pain nor suffering.”<sup>146</sup> To escape its pain, the yearning individual finds solace only in death.<sup>147</sup> This death is purely natural. Essence slips through the fingers of spirit, like smoke or mist.

Nonetheless, in a certain way, the natural end of the *sehnsüchtig* individual may prove meaningful, but only insofar as the escaped essence is taken “for us” or captured as a moment of speculative science. According to this logic, we might say that Hegel, in *thinking* the death of Novalis, and in thus having it participate in the life-story of spirit, has saved him from a purely natural and meaningless death. However, for Novalis, the price to pay for such salvation is being reduced to a figure of (Hegelian) Science: to the figure of *Gemüt* or to the yearning of a beautiful soul.

## Intermezzo 2: Irony and barbarities

### The barbarity of one-sidedness

Through his critiques of Schlegel and Novalis, Hegel reveals what are for him two fundamental forms of romantic irony. In the former, Hegel finds the expression of a hypertrophied understanding (*Verstand*), which, through its own sophistry, remains fixated in hypocritical “vanitization” (*Vereitelung*), and whose critical judgments decimate the objective truth upon which they declaim. On the other hand, in Novalis, Hegel discovers the expression of a terminal skepticism, one that refuses *all* objectivity and takes refuge in the heart of its own inner feelings, upon which it feeds and satisfies itself in its self-consumption. In spite of the “symphilosophical” interconnection between the two positions and their common root in subjective vacuity, we are nonetheless dealing with two poles that are as distinct as north and south.

The dichotomy of the two ironic expressions is anything but accidental. To the extent that it reflects the non-resolution of two unilateral positions, this complementary opposition lies at the heart of Hegel’s take on romantic irony. I believe that the crucial nature of irony’s binary character is best understood through the Hegelian concept of barbarity (*Barbarei*); without this notion, what is at stake in the critique of romantic irony is not readily apparent.

In Hegel’s *Wastebook* fragments from the Jena period, the term “barbarity” (or “barbarian”) appears several times, in a context where intuition stands opposed to the understanding (*Verstand*). “Remaining in intuition [...], as does Jacob Böhme, is barbarity, just as relying on principles [is] superficiality”;<sup>1</sup> and in the next paragraph: “The barbarian is astonished when he learns that the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squared sides of the right angle. In his opinion, it could easily be otherwise; [he] fears, above all, the understanding and remains in intuition.” Conversely, in his essay on skepticism, from the same period, Hegel evokes, “the barbarity that consists in attributing a certainty and irrefutable truth to facts of consciousness,” an expression referring to the unilateral dogmatism of “the understanding, raised to absolute status.”<sup>2</sup>

In fact, barbarity describes the unilateral manifestation of either the intuition or the understanding, to the extent that these one-sided expressions stand opposed to the organic and objective unity of (Hegelian) Science. We must not underestimate the devastating power of these elements, which is ultimately drawn from pure subjective negativity. The destructive character of unilateral subjectivity, implicit in the term “Barbarei,” takes on a historical form, in a passage from the *System of Ethical Life* essay, where barbarous intuition is actually linked to the figure of Genghis Khan, in opposition to the barbarous understanding, which Hegel associates with savage Northern tribes.<sup>3</sup>

In the first case, “according to the subsuming of the concept under the intuition [...T]he repressed indeterminate [element] frees itself in surging forward, and barbarity and destruction fall upon civilized existence, clearing out, freeing, leveling and equalizing everything.”<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that the term “concept,” at this (Schellingian) stage in the evolution of Hegel’s thought, should be taken as reflecting the differentiating tendency of the (Kantian) concepts of the understanding. Barbarity thus appears as an expression of totally indeterminate intuition, which destroys and sweeps aside all the differences stemming from cultured reflection.

In its greatest splendor, devastation surges forth in the West, and a Genghis Khan, a Tamerlane clean out entire regions of the world, like the brooms of God.<sup>5</sup>

To this barbarity of “nature turned against culture” stands opposed its other expression, where “northern barbarians continuously attack the south.”<sup>6</sup> The northern barbarians are precisely “under the determination of the understanding,”<sup>7</sup> subsuming intuition under the concept. Here, we witness “the absolute devastation” of nature by “the absolute subjectivity”<sup>8</sup> of cultivated understanding. This devastation is:

the absolute drive, without middle term, the absolute concept in its complete indeterminateness, the restlessness of the absolute concept’s infinity, restlessness that, in its action of annihilating opposites, one by the other, annihilates itself and is nothing other than the real-being [*Realsein*] of absolute subjectivity.

In using the term “barbarity” to describe the one-sidedness of intuition or reflection, Hegel probably finds inspiration in Schiller, who, in his *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man* (1795) qualifies as “barbarian” the man who lives exclusively according to principles, at the expense of his feelings, and “savage [Wilder],” the man who, conversely, lives exclusively according to feeling or intuition. The two unilateral aspects represent two ways for man to be in

contradiction with himself and, ultimately, with humanity as an organic whole. Schiller is seeking to reconcile with nature the idea of reason promoted by the *Aufklärung*, in a synthesis that should recognize each as an expression of freedom: reason, according to the Kantian notion of a freely determined will, and nature, along Herderian lines, where nature freely expresses itself in human feeling. Thus, Schiller writes:

There are two ways for man to be in opposition with himself: in the way of the savage, if his feelings impose their hegemony over his principles; in the way of the barbarian, if his principles ruin his feelings.<sup>9</sup>

In Schiller, the “total character” of man must comport “at equal distance” the two opposed facets, the moral uniformity of reason and the vital disorder of nature, a reconciliation that is postulated in the concept of an esthetic interplay (inspired by Kant’s idea of esthetic judgment) between the formal and the sensitive instincts. Maintaining oneself unilaterally in one of the two positions therefore implies a barbarian stance with regard to the totality, breaking it down into impoverished components: reason as purely calculative and nature as mechanically determinant.

The choice of the term “Barbarei” in both Hegel and Schiller is perhaps best understood with regard to the unity against which barbarity stands opposed, i.e. with reference to the beautiful unity of the imagined Greek world. In any case, for both thinkers, the true totality is nothing other than the unity of the two opposed tendencies, modeled as a free interplay, in Schiller, and as the playing out of the concept, in Hegel. In the latter case, the immediate totality of the Greek world is rediscovered, fully mediated, in the organic unity of Science.

## The language of barbarity

In Hegel, it is important to grasp the *formal* nature of barbarous expressions. On the side of intuition, it is only when feeling expresses or utters itself that it constitutes a threat to the beautiful totality of scientific knowing. Unilateral intuition that remains mute, which does not express itself, remains an inner, natural phenomenon that is the appropriate object of Hegelian anthropology where it may be understood as a pathological condition of the soul. However, when intuition does utter itself, its expression remains a purely formal and tautological identity that must necessarily take on the form of predication. We are dealing with “a proposition of identity [which] consequently proclaims itself

as follows: 'Everything is identical with itself'; 'A = A.'<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the language of one-sided intuition can only be articulated in a form opposed to the one taken on by the language of true objectivity, because the former does not include the content-ful difference within identity.

It is very important to really understand the true meaning of identity, which requires, above all, that it not be taken simply as an abstract identity, i.e. as an identity that excludes difference; this is the point where all bad philosophy is distinguished from that which alone deserves the name of philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

In an apparently paradoxical fashion, the bad philosophy of intuition, expressing itself in terms of a formal identity, cannot help but assume "the identity of the understanding," because the form of intuition's proposition "is nothing other than the law of the abstract understanding."<sup>12</sup> In other words, linguistically speaking, there is no difference in form between the statements of one-sided intuition and those of one-sided understanding. In both cases, the statements must be taken as merely abstract judgments, formal and subjective. The pure concept, contained in the copula, has not yet developed into the objective particularity of what *is*, an affirmation of existence that implies differentiation. Rather, "the identity without difference can be seen as constituting the [formal] relation between subject and predicate."<sup>13</sup> We therefore have a kind of mirror image, where the form of judgment merely posits the felt identity of intuition, which, in utilizing the judgment form specific to the understanding, does nothing other than posit this same identity.

Consequently, the "bad philosophy" of one-sided intuition constitutes a barbarity to the extent that its expressions, in positing an identity that is "abstract, simply formal," tears apart the rational totality, just as the judgments of the understanding in the absolute form of subjective irony also destroy that totality. The identity that is posited by the two expressions is only that of the  $I = I$ , of particular self-consciousness's subjectivity, in its absolute self-certainty. Both are formal, without the true content belonging to expressions of objective truth. Such substantial content (*Gehalt*) is that of Science, i.e. the objective discourses of the natural sciences, mind, the state, art, and religion that make up the content of the *Encyclopedia*.

To the extent that Hegel's critique of romantic irony, as I have presented it, defines irony as a subjective self-feeling that uses the predicative form of judgment in order to tear apart the objective totality of Science, we can see how its twin expressions can be conceived in terms of barbarity. Indeed, because the

actual notion of romantic irony appears late in Hegel's works, in comparison with the notion of barbarity, one might even venture the hypothesis that his idea of romantic irony is formed on the conceptual basis of that earlier notion. Within both irony and barbarity, we find the same unilateral expressions of subjective negativity, according to the understanding or the intuition, as well as the threat they represent, in proclaiming themselves, to the organic unity of knowledge.

### Relation to objectivity: Empiricism and skepticism

With respect to objectivity, it is possible to discern a certain empiricism, one that implies true objectivity's disintegration at the hands of the barbarous unilateral judgments of understanding, which, in turn, only recognizes finite phenomena as the adequate objects of knowledge.

According to this empirical way [of knowing] the determinations and laws of right and ethics, as well as the content of religion, appear as something contingent, and [...] their objectivity and intrinsic truth is abandoned.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, we discover, as well, a radical skepticism—one that no longer believes in the reality of this impoverished objectivity, denying the existence of all external reality, sweeping aside all difference in a scorched-earth campaign of feeling. However, while it may be tempting to associate empiricism with the ironic expression represented by Schlegel, and skepticism with the ironic expression that we have discovered in Hegel's figure of Novalis, it is important not to forget that each figure carries the traces of both unilateral moments within itself. On one hand, empiricism, whether naïve or critical (Kantian), carries within itself the seeds of skepticism: in both cases, knowledge of universal truth, i.e. of the Truth, remains impossible<sup>15</sup>; but, on the other hand, skepticism, in proclaiming itself, cannot but take up the forms of judgment belonging to the understanding; in other words, it becomes dogmatic. The reciprocal instability of empiricism and skepticism is based on the fact that both are grounded solely in subjective feeling, on self-feeling. Whether the feelings and intuitions, for skeptical consciousness, spring from its inner soul, cut off from all external objectivity, or, conversely, whether the feelings are presented through the external material offered up to the forms of empirical consciousness, the feelings and intuitions in question are always the immediate facts of subjective experience. In both cases, it is a matter of the  $I = I$  relation, which excludes any involvement in true objectivity. The world



is reduced to a innumerable diversity of subjective feelings, which are there in order to fill the emptiness of the subject himself.<sup>16</sup>

In reducing the ironical expressions of Schlegel and Novalis to their radical “barbarity,” we see how Hegel considers irony to be an insult against the conceptual totality of true objectivity: the objectivity of Science and its world.<sup>17</sup> The necessarily one-sided character of irony, found in the unreconciled dichotomy of its expression, is a fundamental element of Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher. However, while Schlegel and Novalis tend to each represent a specific expression of this one-sidedness, Schleiermacher, as we will see, incarnates a kind of monstrous hybrid of both ironic forms. In fact, his unreconciled individuality comes to represent, for Hegel, nothing less than the manifestation of an ironic current lying at the heart of the modern world: a current undermining true, substantial objectivity, precisely at the moment when, through Hegelian Science’s instantiation at the University of Berlin, its concept has begun to be actualized.<sup>18</sup>

## Schleiermacher

*All Holy Scripture is but a mausoleum of religion.*

Schleiermacher

From the conceptual base that we have established through our exploration of Hegel's reading of Schlegel and Novalis, we are now able to venture forth and address the Hegelian critique of Schleiermacher. As we will see, Hegel's stance against his Berlin rival is only comprehensible in light of the unilateral elements of the understanding (*Verstand*) and intuition, together with the notion of barbarity that underscores this one-sidedness. The barbarity of one-sidedness expresses irony's destructive opposition to the speculative totality, just as ancient barbarity stood opposed to the Greek polis. We have seen how a specific relation to objectivity underlies the barbarities of the understanding and intuition—a relation that may be grasped in terms of empiricism and skepticism, producing a world other than that of the beautiful Greek unity. This relation to the world is formed around the centrality of empty selfhood, filling itself with an infinitely diverse content of immediate sensations and phenomena, just as it does with its own inner feelings.

Although references to Schleiermacher's thought can be found throughout Hegel's works, first in the *Difference Between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*, and in *Faith and Knowing* (1801–2); then several years later in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807); and finally, in the *Encyclopedia* (1817–31), as well as in the Heidelberg and Berlin series of *Lectures*, the most developed and explicit critique of Schleiermacher is found on the outskirts of Hegel's body of work, in the Preface he wrote to H. F. W. Hinrichs's work on religion.<sup>1</sup> Unlike his polemical texts on Schlegel, where Hegel does not hesitate to name his adversary, the texts on Schleiermacher only refer to him in an elliptical fashion—through mention of works by the theologian, like the *Speeches* or the *Soliloquies*,<sup>2</sup> or by adopting Schleiermacher's specific expressions, for example, “virtuosity,” “intuition of the

universe,” and above all, as is the case in the Preface to Hinrichs’s work, “the religion of feeling.” Most of these terms are derived from the *Speeches on Religion*, a book that remained anonymous only in its first edition (1799)<sup>3</sup> and which, for Hegel, represented Schleiermacher’s defining work, even when, in the Preface, Hegel brings up the content of Schleiermacher’s recently published *Dogmatics*, 23 years later.<sup>4</sup> In spite of these references, Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher remains based on the key conceptions of intuition and understanding (*Verstand*). As I will show, although Hegel’s first appraisal of Schleiermacher arises through their particular notions of “intuition,” his ultimate grasp of his Berlin rival, as seen in the Preface to Hinrichs’s work, is surprising: Schleiermacher’s religion of feeling is the culmination of a genealogy whose principal protagonist is the understanding.

Consequently, I will begin analyzing Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher where they take place in his first references to the Pastor (where the subject at hand is primarily intuition and feeling), and then I will turn to the Preface, where the genealogy of *Verstand* is articulated. This later text will allow us to clearly identify what is *actually* at stake in Hegel’s critique of romantic irony: how its barbarous expressions threaten both objective truth (Hegelian Science) and true objectivity (the world that this Science engenders).

## Intuition and feeling

### Schleiermacher and the fate of intuition in Hegel

Although Hegel does not appear to have taken seriously any real evolution in Schleiermacher’s thought, his own thinking regarding his adversary follows a path that evolves from a rather sympathetic first approach, to the polemical critique of the Berlin period. It is remarkable that this progressive depreciation mirrors the fate of intuition itself in Hegel’s own philosophy: the totalizing premonition of intellectual intuition, a notion that he shares, at the beginning of his career, with Schelling and Hölderlin, becomes progressively reduced to the status of a particular, subjective feeling. Surprisingly, at the same time that Hegel distances himself from his first rather positive take on intuition, becoming increasingly critical toward the notion, Schleiermacher himself appears to reciprocally (from the second edition of his *Speeches* (1806) onwards) abandon the term in favor of the more particular concept of “feeling [*Gefühl*].” Whether this semantic shift happens, in Schleiermacher, as the result of Hegel’s critique of the notion of intuition, as it is first expressed in *Faith and Knowledge* (1802), or

simply in order to distinguish his own concept from the speculative (Hegelian) grasp of intellectual intuition,<sup>5</sup> the replacing of the term “intuition” by that of “feeling,” in Schleiermacher, could not but reinforce, in Hegel’s eyes, the truth of his own critique.

Toward the end of the introduction to Hegel’s early essay, *The Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling* (1801–2), there is an explicit reference to the *Speeches on Religion*, in a passage that does not seem to be critical, at least at first reading.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, although the *Speeches* “do not directly address the speculative requirement” of the time, they do show, “by the reception they have received, and furthermore [by] the earnestness with which people, motivated by more or less obscure feelings, have begun to open up to the plenitude of poetry and art [...] the need for a philosophy that is able to appease nature, so mistreated by the philosophies of Kant and Fichte.”<sup>7</sup> Hegel appears to recognize, in the *Speeches*, the same unifying project that underlies Schelling’s and his new speculative philosophy: overcoming the oppositional relation that subjective idealism brings about with regard to objectivity—a project that Hegel also discovers in those who “have begun to open up to the plenitude of poetry and art.”

In fact, however, the *Speeches* and their reception are only evoked in order to demonstrate the speculative requirement of the time—a requirement which cannot be satisfied by obscure feelings alone, i.e. by simply eliminating the reason of the *Aufklärung*, but rather by bringing it together with nature, and thus actualizing the union that is anticipated, but deferred, in Kant. “Reason must harmonize with [nature] by forming itself as nature, through its own forces.”<sup>8</sup> On one hand, the reason of the *Aufklärung*, i.e. the understanding (*Verstand*) of subjective idealism, posits nature as purely objective, thereby excluding any possibility of speculative (scientific) development;<sup>9</sup> on the other hand, the intuition of the universe,<sup>10</sup> as promoted by Schleiermacher, needs to incorporate such reflexive reason: “Speculative knowledge can only be conceived as the identity of reflection and intuition.”<sup>11</sup> If, in 1801, Hegel is able to show a certain sympathy for the *Speeches*, it is above all because he himself comprehends the synthesis between reflection and intuition—i.e. *speculative* reason,<sup>12</sup> in terms of intuition, namely a transcendental intuition.

A most profound signification is attached to this affirmation, made with conviction: no philosophy without transcendental intuition. For what would it mean to philosophize without intuition? To lose oneself endlessly in absolute finitude. [...] Transcendental intuition goes beyond all opposition; it abolishes all difference between the construction of the universe by and for the intelligence

and its organization seen as something objective, apparently independent. The act of producing the consciousness of this activity is called speculation; in it, ideality and reality are but one and it is thus intuition.<sup>13</sup>

In 1801, therefore, Hegel's notion of speculation can be understood as an intuition of the "universe" in its subjective-objective totality, thereby likening it, at least superficially, to the definition of religion found in the 1799 edition of the *Speeches*.<sup>14</sup> This similarity regarding intuition should not, however, veil the differences already at play, as anticipated in the Hegelian reference to the speculative requirement of the time, and attested to by the reception of the *Speeches*. For, as a "presupposition" or an "absolute presupposition," the speculative requirement is presented in two distinct moments in the *Difference* text: the presupposition of "the absolute itself, the final aim" produced by (Kantian) reason "in liberating consciousness from limitations," and the presupposition of consciousness "coming out of the totality" in order to posit the separating determinations of being and not-being, of the concept and being, of finitude and infinity.<sup>15</sup> These two presuppositions form the requirement of *philosophy* to the extent that their opposition (between identity and difference) must be synthesized through the speculative activity of philosophy itself. In this way, as proof of a philosophical requirement of the time, Schleiermacher's *Speeches* and their reception are symptomatic of a prephilosophical condition—of a still stark opposition between the intuition and the understanding, awaiting speculative conciliation in the form of knowledge that Hegel refers to as transcendental intuition. The twin expressions of transcendental intuition and transcendental knowledge, Hegel remarks in this early essay, represent the unity of reflective intelligence in its idealistic freedom and nature in its realistic necessity (i.e. the ideal Kantian unity). "The difference of expression only indicates the predominance of the ideal factor or the real factor."<sup>16</sup> According to Hegel, the speculative unity at stake is not yet carried out in the *Speeches*. By setting aside reflective thought, Schleiermacher only manages to maintain its opposition with intuition.<sup>17</sup>

By remaining on the side of intuition, Schleiermacher is already placed under the sign of Nature (as opposed to thought), where we will find him subsequently classified according to the Hegelian headings of *Gemüt*, feeling, and "the natural man." However, in 1801, Hegel has not yet portrayed nature as the radical other, opposed to the subjectivity of the Idea. Indeed, at this time, subjectivity (with a Schellingian resonance) is understood as already participating in the objective pole, since both poles partake of the original

identity. This is why Hegel, in his *Differenzschrift* can refer to “nature mistreated by the systems of Kant and Fichte,” because they are systems of subjective idealism where the objective, natural pole only truly exists with regard to an external, determining subjectivity acting in the practical sphere. It is only after 1803 that the immediate *intuitive* complicity between reason and nature, between subjective and objective poles, makes room for the subjective activity of spirit, hitherto comprehended as the “rage [*Grimm*]” against, and the “destruction” of nature—where “the bones” of nature’s “figures [*Gestaltungen*]” are ground down, and their flesh compressed to the point of liquification.”<sup>18</sup> Briefly put, the mistreatment of nature at the hands of subjective idealism will become a *moment* of Hegelian philosophy, the moment of the understanding.

Nature, from that point on, where Hegel leaves Schelling behind, will be understood as immediate objectivity offered up to the fiery crucible of ideal subjectivity, to the negativity of thought, which destroys nature in order to have it reborn in “a new, ideal figure, kingdom of shadows that has lost this first life.”<sup>19</sup> The fate of nature thus reflects that of intuition. Overthrown from its transcendental status, where it was likened to speculative Reason, intuition is now brought down to the level of natural feeling, the province of particular subjectivity. Hence, to the extent that Schleiermacher is bound to the notion of intuition, he must share the same fate that is assigned to it, in Hegel: from a starting reference as transcendental intuiting, it finishes within a critique of natural feeling, anchored in particular subjectivity. It is such particularity, applied to religious feeling, which first comes on the scene in the second explicit reference to the *Speeches*, in Hegel’s *Faith and Knowing*, from 1802.

Here, in a dizzyingly dense passage, at the end of his chapter on Jacobi, Hegel refers to the *Speeches* as an “exponential expression [*Potenzirung*]” of the same Protestant spirit found in Jacobi. This spirit is characterized by the separation between the understanding (*Verstand*) and feeling, i.e. by a fixation with the finite things of the real world, over against individual, Pietistic feeling. According to Hegel, both Jacobi and Schleiermacher are symptomatic of such a separation.

As in Jacobi’s philosophy, [speculative] reason is only taken as instinct and feeling; ethics is only conceived within empirical contingency and as a dependency on things such that they are given by experience, inclination and whim, while knowledge is only comprehended as consciousness of particularities and singularities, whether they be from without or within.<sup>20</sup>

What is surprising here is the immediately empirical relation that is established with regard to both (internal) feeling and (external) knowing, between Protestant consciousness and nature defined as a mass of finite particularities stemming either from the soul or the world. It is in reaction to this immediate relation that painful yearning (*Sehnsucht*) will take root, as a desire for a substantial, essential beyond. In fact, it is with regard to *Sehnsucht*, and its fate, that Schleiermacher will be distinguished from Jacobi, in the text from *Faith and Reason*. Whereas, for Jacobi, consolation and relief from painful yearning are readily at hand through his embracing of Christian faith, which grounds *both* finite reality and the infinite beyond, the same cannot be said for Schleiermacher:

In the *Speeches*, on the other hand, nature is destroyed as a collection of finite realities, under what is known as the Universe, so that yearning is recalled from the flight that took it past reality towards an eternal Beyond; as a result, the separation between the knowing subject and the absolute, inaccessible object disappears, and the pain [of separation] is relieved in pleasurable enjoyment [*Genuss*]; infinite striving is satisfied in intuition.<sup>21</sup>

As we noticed with the beautiful soul, intuition of the One or the All may bring about the cessation of that painful separation experienced in *Sehnsucht*, transforming it into enjoyment and satisfaction.<sup>22</sup> However, in Schleiermacher, we are not dealing with the absolute enjoyment that appeared in the beautiful soul of Spirit, at the end of the *Phenomenology*. Here, in Schleiermacher, satisfaction remains at the level of particularity. “This subjectivity-subject of the intuition of the Universe must nonetheless remain something particular and subjective.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, the intuition of the universe puts an end to painful *Sehnsucht* simply by suppressing one of the terms between which infinite striving (*Streben*) takes place: objective nature in its finitude. Hence, in Schleiermacher, Hegel discovers a Spinozistic acosmism, one that thus implies the loss of the determining, separating moment of the understanding.

From this point of view, the intuition of the Universe can be said to achieve a kind of universal objectivity only at the expense of subjective understanding, which is absorbed into universal oneness, i.e. into an “identity with the Universe” that is equally the “reconciliation with nature.”<sup>24</sup> However, such a universal objectivity of the intuition (which would have been presented as Nature itself, in 1801) is now clearly seen as dwelling in particularity: first, because by setting aside finitude, such an intuition is not truly universal (it is only in-finite); second, because it is actually a creation—an intuition of particular subjectivity, one engendered by “the virtuosity of the religious artist,” a figure that Hegel finds in the *Speeches*.<sup>25</sup>

Like any artist, according to Hegel's esthetics, the religious artist must express an inner content objectively. Artistic greatness or the beauty of an artist's work can be measured with regard to the universality of this content. However, instead of setting aside his own particularity by expressing himself "through the work of an objective representation of great figures and their interaction"<sup>26</sup> (as is the case with the Greek genius who "puts the universe into movement" in his epics or tragedies), or "rather than depriving his lyrical expression of what is subjective" by presenting himself through "a universal discourse,"<sup>27</sup> the virtuoso of religion only produces "the exposition of his *own* intuition of the Universe."<sup>28</sup> In this "art without work of art [...] the freedom of the supreme intuition consists in the singularity and in the having-something-particular-for-oneself."<sup>29</sup> Briefly, the virtuoso of religion, behaving as an artist, only reproduces, in other people, his own particular intuition.

Through this notion of the religious artist, we understand better the meaning of the above-quoted passage from the *Differenzschrift*, where Hegel notes the *Speeches*' favorable reception in "those people [who] have begun to open up to the plenitude of poetry and art." According to Hegel, the *Speeches* are a kind of art, not in spite of their immediately religious content but rather because of it. However, because the content of this artistic expression proves to be a particular and subjective intuition, the religious virtuoso's art remains devoid of any real work. It remains "the externalization of an absolute innerness, immediate explosion or reiteration of an individual and particular enthusiasm, but not the true externalization that a work of art must be."<sup>30</sup> As with the ironic artist discussed above in Schlegel and Novalis, the artist of religion personified by Schleiermacher remains an artistic failure.

## Communities of religious feeling

It might seem that the particular, subjective intuition of the religious virtuoso attains a level of objective universality when he propagates his vision within a religious community. However, the religious artist only ends up reproducing himself, i.e. the particularity of his personal intuition, within a *particular* religious community. The community in question is characterized as an empty vessel that the virtuoso of religion comes to fill, and the content that he brings to his community is nothing more than the reflection of his own *intuition*. Thus:

The goal or purpose of the community that makes itself subordinate must be to have[...]acting within it the inner intuition of the edifying, enthusiastic virtuoso. Rather than eliminating a subjective particularity ("idiot" is used to



describe an individual that possesses a particularity) or at least ignoring it, enough things *must* be accorded to it *in order that* it may form the principle of a particular community.<sup>31</sup>

By definition, a community subordinated to a religious virtuoso is therefore the expression of a singular particularity. Because there are an infinite number of singular particularities (“one” immediately implies an infinite number of “ones”), “in this way, the little communities and particularities promote themselves ad infinitum, multiplied infinitely, seeking each other out, fleeing each other or coming together at random; like figures in a sea of sand exposed to the play of the wind, their groupings change.”<sup>32</sup>

This “sea of sand” of monadic communities, each one possessing its singular “point of view,” its own intuition of the universe, cannot form true objectivity. Such objectivity requires the mediation of a far richer form of particularity, i.e. a participation in a world constituted by much more than simple multiplicity, more than a bad infinity of finite singularities. This is why, writes Hegel with a certain irony, monadic communities come to “renounce objectivity and calmly co-exist in a general theory of atoms.”<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, such a reality, made up of a bad infinity of singular communities, each one reflecting the vision of one inspired individual, is not the reality of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (ethical substance). As true objectivity, such a reality expresses the reconciliation of essence and being, forming an essential reality that is a substantial content of Science. In light of this, we may comprehend that, according to Hegel, the multitude of religious communities appears as the result of “the separation of Church and State by the Enlightenment,”<sup>34</sup> where the reality of the State is divorced from its essence. Following this rupture, the “catholicity [i.e. the universality] of religion only subsists in the negativity and universality of the individual being.”<sup>35</sup> Such an individual remains entirely determined as an abstract, subjective innerness who cannot “acquire its objectivity and reality in the corpus of a people and a universal Church.”<sup>36</sup> The universal intuition of the virtuoso remains anchored in individual particularity and his reflection into a monadic community does not attain true objectivity, that of an organic State embracing the universal Church within it.

Indeed, to the extent that the Church and the State can each claim (the, first, by the lived reality of its doctrines; the second, through that of its laws) to represent “universal” and true objectivity, i.e. in that they both represent substantial contents of Science, Hegel proposes a reciprocal, organic relation between the two. As we find in the *Philosophy of Right*, Church and State share “the same content of truth and rationality,”<sup>37</sup> while being differentiated by their

form. Hence, concerning its doctrine, the Church must enjoy complete freedom with regard to the State. However, to the extent religion is positive (issues commandments) and possesses goods, i.e. property, “it passes from the sphere of innerness to that of temporal life, enters into the sphere of the State and falls directly under its laws.”<sup>38</sup> Further, the State can expect “religious justification” from the Church, for its “doctrine is not only something within consciousness but, as doctrine, it is also a kind of external expression that addresses a content that is most intimately bound to the ethical principles and laws of the State.”<sup>39</sup>

The religious virtuoso does not recognize the reciprocity between religion and the State, and is beholden unilaterally to the former, as an expression of inwardness, a position made possible by the separation between Church and State mentioned above. Entirely removing the State from religious concerns,<sup>40</sup> however, allows the virtuoso of religion to ignore the concrete Good, whether in the form of laws, duties, and State institutions or in the form of positive Church doctrines. The virtuoso thus partakes in the arbitrariness of religious feeling, according to the whims of his own subjective inclinations. Such subjective arbitrariness brings to mind, with regard to religion, the form of particular subjectivity brought to light in Schlegel and Novalis: the sophistry and self-certainty of ironic consciousness. Indeed, Hegel explicitly makes this link by referring to the barbaric ironical expressions of these other two *Athenäum* romantics:

Those who, over against the State, want to remain beholden to the form of religion [without content] behave like those who believe they attain what is true in knowledge by referring uniquely to essence,<sup>41</sup> without passing from that abstraction to empirical existence, or like those (cf. *supra* s. 140 Remark)<sup>42</sup> who want only the abstract Good and leave to each one’s whims the task of determining what is good<sup>43</sup>.

In the passage from *Faith and Knowing* that I have been discussing, Hegel is attempting to demonstrate how universal truth, the object of Schleiermacher’s intuition of the Universe, always collapses into a particular, subjective feeling. Already, in the tortuous articulations of this text, the satisfactions of feeling are seen as presupposing the painful *Sehnen* (striving) that arises from the separation between a “consciousness of particularities and singularities,” and an essential “eternal Beyond.”<sup>44</sup> We have also seen how this separation and the pain it occasions, disappear in the intuition of the All. This *particular* aspect of intuition, i.e. its incarnation in individual feeling and satisfaction, only attains its culminating expression, as a form of purely animal enjoyment, 20 years later in Hegel’s Preface to Hinrichs’s *Religion*.

## Natural man and the bestiality of feeling

Within the exclusive confines of the religion of feeling, the religious subject claims to be against any idea of religious faith based on the external objectivity of religious doctrines and teachings. However, it is only such objectivity that is capable of determining and correcting the natural element of feeling: "Natural feelings must be determined and corrected and purified by the doctrine and the practice of religion and by the solid principles of ethical substance, and it is only on these foundations that all that makes feeling just, religious and moral is introduced into it."<sup>45</sup>

Without the objective, positive content of religious doctrines and practices, the faithful individual ends up following what Hegel calls "the doctrine of subjectivity"; he is "the natural man"<sup>46</sup> of (natural) feeling who claims to know the mind (spirit) of God "without knowing anything at all."<sup>47</sup> However, the spirit of God is distinctly different from the feeling of God, which is ultimately nothing more than a particular feeling like any other. As we have seen, the pure subjective form can receive diverse contents from both within and from outside itself; religious feelings, in themselves, have neither status nor substantial content that is essentially different from the sensations and appearances that form the material for the understanding's formation of representations, or the animal who feels, for example, hunger.

Through the figure of "the natural man," who is ultimately non-spiritual and hence non-human, Hegel attributes an animal aspect to inner feeling. It is this aspect that is implicitly applied to Schleiermacher in the most openly polemical passage of the Preface to Hinrichs's *Religion*:

If feeling makes up the fundamental determination of man's essence, then man is defined as the equal of a beast, for it is beastly to have one's determination in feeling and to live according to feeling. If, in man, religion is based only on a feeling, it has no other determination than that of being a feeling of its dependency; and the dog would then be the best Christian, for the dog carries this strongest in itself and lives mainly within this feeling.<sup>48</sup>

The reference to religious feelings and particularly to that of dependency, directly connects this passage to the author of the *Speeches* and the *Dogmatics*,<sup>49</sup> as does the reference to the feeling of redemption in the next sentence: "The dog also has feelings of redemption when its hunger is satisfied by a bone."<sup>50</sup>

On one hand, the bestiality of feeling is understood through its opposition to that which is truly human: thought. However, on the other hand, we have to comprehend such bestiality through its appetitive aspect, i.e. through the natural

hunger that human subjectivity feels when, cut off from substantial objectivity, it resorts to seeking lost essence and satisfaction in the consumption of its own inner feelings. The sought-after satisfaction is thus the appeasement or relief from its condition of painful separation with respect to the essential beyond. As we saw in Schlegel and Novalis, the consumer satisfaction of the particular self may just as easily be turned to the finite sensations of the outside world as to the content of inner feeling.<sup>51</sup>

Hegel's reference to the feeling of dependency in the context of the religion of feeling is more than a simple "key" allowing us to relate such anonymous theology to Schleiermacher. In Hegel, dependency generally defines the immediate relation between any living being and natural finitude. In the same way that, in the *Phenomenology*, the slave or bondsman is distinguished from the master by the former's initial attachment to immediate, natural objectivity, the selfhood of religious feeling is characterized by its servitude (*Knechtschaft*). Similarly, as the slave liberates himself by participating in the movement of spirit, the freedom of the believer, in Hegel, is carried out in the same way—through spirit, which has its "liberation and the feeling of its divine freedom"<sup>52</sup> in real religion, with the substantial objectivity of its doctrines, teachings, and practices.

It is true that religion, duty, and right must become a matter of feeling and "take up residence in the heart,"<sup>53</sup> but it is a completely different matter to claim that such real, objective contents are the fruits of feeling:

It all depends upon this difference in attitude. Upon this is based the distinction that separates traditional honesty and faith, genuine religiosity and the ethical substance that gives precedence to God, the truth and duty, from the perversion, the particular arrogance and absolute egotism that have arisen in our time, and which have made stubbornness, opinion and capriciousness into the rule and right for religiosity.<sup>54</sup>

The difference in attitude brings about an ethical distinction within the feelings themselves. "Obedience, discipline, faith, in the traditional sense of the word, reverence for God and the truth" are associated with the first, truly ethical attitude. On the contrary, that attitude that makes everything depend upon feeling brings about "vanity, particular arrogance, shallowness and pride."<sup>55</sup> These are, Hegel claims, the feelings belonging to "the natural man." From this figure, of man living in the enjoyment of natural immediacy, of sensations and feelings, while renouncing all knowledge of objective truth, the text of the Preface comes to address the "sophistry [*Sophisterei*]" and the "worldly wisdom"

of Schlegel.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the “bestial ignorance of God” that Hegel associates with a theology based on feeling, together with Schlegel’s worldly wisdom, which proves to be only the “sophistry of this ignorance,”<sup>57</sup> form the expressions of the two radical *unilateral* barbarities we saw earlier: skeptical intuition and empirical understanding. To the extent that these two expressions employ “only the formal arms” of philosophy, i.e. its “culture of reflection,”<sup>58</sup> they must be included in “those theories that destroy the ethical consistency of man and the State, just as they destroy religion.”<sup>59</sup> Briefly put, when such unilateral positions express themselves, they are expressions of irony.

## History of the understanding and the actuality of irony

### The polemical background

The tone and content of Hegel’s Preface to Hinrichs’s *Religion* is hard to grasp without at least summarily taking into account the polemical, and indeed conflictual nature of the relationship between Hegel and Schleiermacher. The dispute between them goes beyond purely theoretical issues, taking root in their personal lives, particularly during Hegel’s Berlin period. While Schleiermacher felt forced to accept his rival’s posting at the University of Berlin, where Schleiermacher had been teaching since its founding, in 1810 (in which he participated with Fichte and Humboldt), he did manage to block Hegel’s nomination to the city’s prestigious Academy.<sup>60</sup> In order to keep Hegel out, Schleiermacher went as far as to dissolve the philosophical section of the institution. Their differences became particularly poisonous when the Russian playwright and diplomat Kotzebue was murdered by the theology student Sand, bringing about repressive State measures; these were responsible for the firing of Professor De Wette, who had written a letter of condolence to Sand’s mother.<sup>61</sup> J. Hoffmeister writes: “Regarding the removal of De Wette, Hegel declared himself in favor of the State’s right to ‘remove a professor, provided it maintains his salary’; Schleiermacher, at a meeting, in November, 1819, called this affirmation, ‘pathetic’, and Hegel replied in equally strong terms.”<sup>62</sup> Pöggeler confirms that Schleiermacher’s correspondence shows that he considered Hegel as a relentless adversary, from 1821.<sup>63</sup>

For his part, Hegel kept Schleiermacher out of his own circle, and particularly from the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (Annals of Scientific Criticism), even threatening to no longer collaborate if Schleiermacher were asked to participate.<sup>64</sup> Later, Hegel suspected Schleiermacher of being the anonymous

author of the “Letters Against Hegel’s Encyclopedia,” which were published in 1829.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, it is possible that the personal animus of their conflict was somewhat lessened toward the end of Hegel’s life, perhaps following the sudden death of Schleiermacher’s cherished, young son and the pastor’s moving, public eulogy. Pöggeler refers to a letter from Hegel’s disciple Edouard Gans, who apparently saw the two old rivals “walking down the slopes of the Rutschberg, from Tivoli, having a friendly discussion.”<sup>66</sup>

## Understanding and faith

The argument of Hegel’s Preface to Hinrichs’s book revolves around the conflict between the understanding (*Verstand*) and faith or, to put it another way, between faith and knowing. These terms take up again, in the religious context, the two poles around which Hegel’s philosophy can, generally, be said to turn, and which we have examined earlier, in their barbarous one-sidedness, as the empirical understanding over against pure feeling or intuition in its skeptical relationship to the world. Although these two instances may seem, at first, to refer solely to the philosophy of consciousness, clearly, in their fullest application, where the understanding is taken as an expression of thought and intuition (qua feeling, faith) is comprehended as an expression of Nature, the reconciliation of the two terms forms the ultimate project of philosophy itself.

In the context of consciousness, where, at first, the critique of the religion of feeling takes place, the fact that understanding and feeling are either fixed in their one-sidedness or, alternately, engaged in a reconciling movement depends on the relation that the particular subject maintains with the world and its substantiality. On another level, in the realm of spirit, the fact that worldly objectivity derives its truth from such substantiality is what lends the reconciliation its scientific significance, and what highlights the stakes and the scandal of barbarity.

In his Preface, Hegel summarily presents the history of the Christian world as a dialectical movement between orthodox faith and what was known as “natural” religion, i.e. in its most extreme form, the rational humanism of the Enlightenment. Schleiermacher’s religion of feeling appears, here, as the sclerotic, non-reconciled endpoint of this movement. Furthermore, examining this dialectical movement allows us to discover a Hegelian genealogy, where the deep conflict that already haunts his early writings, between positive faith and rational freedom, finally ends in a condition of modern malaise, one that stands opposed to the reconciling promise of systematic Science.

In fact, the foundation of the conflict between Hegel and Schleiermacher is already apparent during Hegel's Tübingen period when he found himself caught between two opposed currents of theological debate. On one side, his professor of theology, Gottlob Storr, offered a reading of biblical text which adhered to the positive orthodoxy of faith, while, on the other side, stood the teaching assistant Immanuel Diez, leader of the informal Kantian reading group in which both Schelling and Hölderlin participated. Diez embodied the most radical trend in natural (rational) religion, where both the divinity of Christ and the truth of Revelation are denied.<sup>67</sup> Hegel's writings at Berne and Frankfurt show him to be torn between these two opposing trends: earlier figures of the ones we have seen reappear in the forms of (empirical) understanding and (skeptical) feeling. Ultimately, these opposing positions can only be resolved in systematic philosophy (Hegelian Science), where religion becomes philosophy of religion and philosophy becomes absolute knowing. However, as against the happy narrative put forth in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel's much later Preface to Hinrichs's *Religion* shows us how the historical dialectic between faith and knowing arrives at a contemporary contradiction, which we have seen associated with the barbarity of romantic irony. Nonetheless, in both works, the protagonist of the historical progression is "thinking" (*das Denken*), which is presented, here, in the reflexive form belonging to the subjective understanding (*das Verstand*).

According to Hegel's narrative, in the Preface, the articulations of reflexive understanding first appear in the late medieval period, just before the Renaissance. In this context, the understanding finds absolute truth in the external finitude of immediate objectivity, comprehended in a frankly linguistic fashion as "the stories, the events, the circumstances and the commands" of positive (dogmatic) religion.<sup>68</sup> In so doing, the understanding "promotes the singularities of this material to the status of true, dignified divinity." By acting this way, the understanding actually *displaces* faith—i.e. it "[demands] the same reverence for, and *faith* toward" such finite textual singularities as for what should be the object of faith: the substantial truth of God.<sup>69</sup> In this way, faith is reduced to a simple "holding-as-true" (*Fürwahrhalten*) that addresses only (textual) finitude, an act of faith that echoes the form of dogmatic empiricism found in Jacobi.

Relegating faith to the service of empirical understanding, in its literal investigations into religious texts, is precisely what Hegel is objecting to. Contrarily, it is perfectly reasonable that faith draws upon the textual stories and doctrines that form the material from which it deduces, for example, its practical

teachings. However, the dogmatic, scholastic “holding-as-true” employs the tools of thought in order to produce only “the sterile erudition found in orthodoxy,”<sup>70</sup> thus claiming to formally establish everything related to God, and to impose such orthodoxy on the understanding of others. Further, over against the linguistic nature of true objectivity, which I have been arguing for in Hegel, it is necessary to stress the textual character of the “finite things” of religion that is being presented here. The objects of dogmatic faith inhabit a formal language that expresses itself in printed “letters” (*Buchstaben*), and in “external historical accounts” (*äusserliche Historische*), which claim to possess, literally, “the last word [*Hauptwort*] on what is Godly.”<sup>71</sup>

We have seen to what extent this type of judging language, which separates the sign from its essential “signified,” is opposed to the substantial language of Science; in the present case, substantial language should be comprehended as the objective content of religion, which itself forms a content (*Gehalt*) of Science. This content, while at first formal (an expression of reflexive thought), must not remain an abstraction if it is to form an object/content of philosophical thought. In fact, philosophical thought further reflects upon the real words of Christian doctrine to the extent that such words are actually *lived* by the faithful. Theology, whose object is the same religious doctrine, must not do away with this substantial content of the objective truth. Indeed, theology’s task, like philosophy’s, consists in “tending toward the reconciliation of faith and reason”<sup>72</sup>—a reconciliation that requires objective content, one that forms the common ground between the two. Without such content, faith and reason remain each the kind of subjective self-certainty found in particular feeling. Although the objective and true content of theology is first formed on the basis of “the creed, the profession of faith that is composed in words and in writings,”<sup>73</sup> as the contents of Science, these doctrines must come to be seen as constituting the lived and learned content of a religious community, within the reality of *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life or substance).<sup>74</sup>

Self-certainty is first the natural feeling and natural will [...]; but the true content comes first to the spirit in word and letter. Religious education carries out the uniting of the two, in order that the feelings that are immediate to man only when they are natural lose their strength, and that which was the letter becomes its own living spirit.<sup>75</sup>

Returning to Hegel’s genealogical account of thought (as *Verstand*) in Christianity, as presented in the Preface to Hinrichs’s *Religion*, we see that the sterile, casuistic erudition of scholastic theology, in its finite textual pronouncements, gets no further than the “letter” of doctrine, and therefore does not apprehend “living



spirit.” However, according to the historical logic of this dialectic, dogmatic scholastic thought or understanding actually brings about its own demise. This is because, in its unbridled promotion of theological erudition and judgments, scholastic thought actually manifests and lets loose the “infinite energy”<sup>76</sup> of thought itself, which turns back upon the bonds and the submission associated with the orthodoxy that it initially took part in. Thus, dialectical negativity, the very soul of thought, turns against the fixed positions of dogmatic knowledge and, historically, we witness the reflexive thought of the Enlightenment freeing itself and attacking the constraints of the Schools.

In religious terms, however, this enlightened revolution means that the doctrinal “histories” and “events” are simply no longer believed in. The words that convey them no longer carry meaning or essential truth. Biblical texts are no longer sacred; they are judged and analyzed hermeneutically, one might say. They form no more than a system of natural signs, “names” or “letters,” and thus can be said to share the fate of objectivity in Kantian empiricism: all is reduced to appearance (*Schein*). In other words, the “given” of Revelation is reduced to an empty objectivity, one that is subjectively determinable. Consequently, essential truth proves to be ungraspable—a thing-in-itself that lies beyond the reach of empirical understanding, whose act of knowing is limited to finite, conditioned things. In such a context, the only way to attain religious (absolute) truth is through feeling.

### **The three presuppositions of the contemporary ironic world**

The contemporary culture of the understanding, which is the culmination of the genealogical trajectory that Hegel proposes in his Preface, ensures that “feeling remains the only means by which religion may be present” to us.<sup>77</sup> If that is the case, it is because the only other form of knowing that is permitted, i.e. the one operating through Kantian understanding, can only attain appearances and finite things, without ever reaching the truth in itself. Consequently, Schleiermacher appears as a “contemporary representation,” to the extent that his religion of feeling is only possible because we have already accepted the other two “absolute presuppositions of our culture and our time”<sup>78</sup>: “spirit [mind] can only know appearances and finite things”<sup>79</sup> (empiricism), and spirit “is incapable of knowing the truth”<sup>80</sup> (skepticism). Here, we recognize, in these two presuppositions, the expressions of ironic barbarity that we have discovered in Hegel’s presentation of Schlegel and Novalis: in the former, the figure of hypertrophied understanding, which, through its judgments, posits

and destroys a world that hypocrisy prevents from seeing as the reflection of his own vanity, and, in Novalis, the expression of a radical skepticism denying all reality, relying entirely on inner feeling as the sole source of subjective content.

Schleiermacher's religion of feeling thus appears as the manifestation of a contemporary malaise, as symptomatic of a world determined as necessarily ironic, i.e. a world opposed to the objective content of Hegelian Science. In other words, the world that Hegel sees dawning, while he is writing, at Berlin, his critique of Schleiermacher and romantic irony, is a state of barbarity determined by cultures of empiricism, skepticism, and feeling.

Further, to the extent that we may recognize our own era as equally determined by these same "absolute presuppositions," and to the extent that we may qualify the general culture of our time as postmodern, it is possible to see Hegel's critique of ironical romanticism as a critique of postmodernity.<sup>81</sup> I will return briefly to this theme in the Conclusion.



## Conclusion

The expressions of romantic subjectivity that we have found portrayed in the figures of Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher engender a vision of the world that Hegel qualifies as empirical: reality is a bad infinity of singularities, determinable by particular subjectivity and thus controllable, consumable, and natural, deprived of any objective essence or meaning. Objective truth is removed, and the unhappy self who, cut off from such truth, finds relief from his pain in the unmediated, bestial satisfactions afforded through his sensations and feelings only takes pleasure in himself, in the self-consumption of vanity *by* vanity, culminating in a pure skepticism where all objectivity is revealed as null and void.

This self-satisfying subjectivity is ironic in that it holds itself fixedly separate from the speculative unity. It is ironic because such fixation does injury to conceptual movement and, above all, because the self of ironic romanticism cannot help but pronounce and proclaim itself. Such pronouncements, which presuppose a symbolic conception of language (and objectivity), where the signifier maintains only an arbitrary and dissociable relation to the signified, take the form of critical judgments. When these are aimed at expressions of true objectivity, i.e. at the discourses that constitute the content of Hegelian Science, they tear apart its beautiful unity with a linguistic action that Hegel qualifies as barbaric. To the extent that the resultant fragments of the living unity are nothing other than the multiplicity of determinable singularities that make up the ironist's empirical world, we can say that the discourse of ironic romanticism engenders the world in which it expresses itself.

By associating true objectivity with the discourse of Science, as Hegel does, it should be clear that the agency of such language participates in the constitution of a world distinct from the one brought about by romantic irony. While the content-ful language of Science expresses itself in the same predicative mode as that used by determinant understanding, it does not remain bound to particular subjectivity. Rather, as the actual content of Science, such language attains a speculative expression within which subjective particularity is overcome. It is the substantiality of scientific objectivity's discourse that distinguishes it from

the judgments of ironic subjectivity; for this substantial content is nothing other than the objectivity of (the subjectivity of) the Idea on earth: State constitutions, laws, religious doctrines, beautiful works of art, the texts of history, of natural science, and, above all, of philosophy. This is the developed content of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, which can thus be comprehended as *logos*: a sentence (*Satz*) comprising a grammar (the *Logic*), linguistic signs (the *Philosophy of Nature*), and a process where the signs are bestowed with meaning (the *Philosophy of Spirit*), in order to present the Idea's godly word: "*Ich bin's* [It is me; I am here]."

As opposed to the discourse of ironic subjectivity, where the signified is distinct from the sign, where what is said is not necessarily what is meant, objective discourse is always, at the same time, full of sense; it is the essence of the thing it conveys. This discourse is articulated scientifically (systematically) to reveal itself as the Idea in all its concreteness. True objectivity only *exists* to the extent that the Idea forms the content of this discourse; the only discourse adequate to this content is that of Science.

Comprehending the world as objective discourse might lead us to a rather limited conception of what Hegel believes forms the real world: true objectivity grasped only as text, and therefore detached from everyday reality. Although it is the case that the objective truth of Science takes place in language, it is necessary to add the following essential qualification. It is only to the extent that this language is humanly lived that its truth proves to be fully objective and that such objectivity can be considered true. It is only to the extent that laws are legislated, broken, litigated, revised, etc., to the extent that religious doctrines are liturgical, believed, shared, and that they, along with the discourses of the natural sciences and art, become the objects of philosophical discourse (which, in turn, is taught and discussed...) that the world may be conceived in terms of true objectivity. Hegel's polemical critique of ironic romanticism, which seems to only deepen over time, clearly demonstrates that, for him, the ironic way of thinking represents a contemporary and pressing threat to the world conceived as the discourse of Science, as the Idea that makes itself *logos*.

Insofar as the discourse of speculative Science (Hegelian philosophy) is seen as the expression of the Idea's *logos*, it cannot help but conceive irony as a threat. If irony indeed represents an actual, existing expression of particular selfhood, and if this expression is considered injurious to philosophy, we must ask ourselves, to what extent Hegel sees his (own) philosophical expression as threatened, not just by a rival discourse, but by a whole new world appearing on

the horizon of his system. In this sense, I believe that it is possible to see Hegel's polemical treatment of ironic romanticism as a critique of postmodernity,<sup>1</sup> which is fundamentally characterized by expressions of critical sophistry, skepticism, and self-feeling. When taken together, such characteristics imply a world (and a linguistic reality) that is endlessly empirical, malleable, controllable, consumable, and without any inherent essentiality.

The postmodern world portrayed in Hegel's critique of romantic irony is one that is reduced to a bad infinity of individual subjects faced with a swarm of facts, data, objects of desire, and other singular, juridical persons. Lacking the ethical substance formed by objective discourses (the objectivity of law, religion, art, etc.), people are confined to the strictly atomistic ontological status of "the public," determined by ironical "vanitization," the reflection of their haunting emptiness. If Hegel conceives the postmodern threat in terms of barbarity, it is because it represents a monstrous hybrid of two trends, each fixed in a unilateral position: the empirical understanding of the *Aufklärung* over against a skeptical inwardness, together giving rise to a culture of self-feeling where the truth only appears in the form of self-certainty.<sup>2</sup> Within this culture of monadic individuality, the only communities possible are ones that are the reflection of one individual member, one who reflects (to himself) a unique point of view, shared by an equally monadic public that is fascistically determined by a sole and unique vision. Such communities can then, for their part, be multiplied to infinity.

It does not take too much imagination to recognize in our own contemporary world many of the postmodern character traits identified through Hegel's critique of romantic irony: consumer society and the culture of personal satisfaction, along with omnipresent individualism and the predominance of juridical personhood with its conception of infinite rights; the culture of information technology where the idea of knowledge is dissolved into unlimited access to data; the empiricism of social and psychological sciences as the only guarantee of scientific truth; the disintegration of "organized" religions into a growing number of monadic cults and sects that are based on the inner, natural feelings of one individual "genius"; the many nihilistic expressions found in contemporary cultures of drugs, crime, and violence. These social traits of our own world presuppose the aspects of empiricism, skepticism, and sentimentalism that Hegel discovers in the individual expressions of Schlegel, Novalis, and, ultimately, Schleiermacher. According to Hegel's fundamental intuition, the expressions of postmodernity can only be anti-philosophical.

If we may be allowed to draw a parallel, within Hegelian philosophy, between the substantial unity of classical Greece and the hypothetical unity of the modern European world, then we might also postulate that Hegel, in his late criticism of ironic romanticism, sees himself in the throes of a thoroughly “Roman” decadence, and perceives his own expression of speculative philosophy, in standing against an ironical contemporary world, as being in opposition to its time. If this is so, then Hegel’s critique of romanticism would certainly belie the facile notion sometimes still attributed to him—of an “end of history” where absolute knowing is supposed to be already carried out in the world. Conversely, however, the idea that Hegel’s philosophy finds itself to be in contradiction with its own time would seem to contradict that philosophy itself, to the extent that it supposedly claims to be the expression of actual, present objectivity.

First, all of Hegel’s considerable pedagogical activity (his life’s work) surely invalidates any idea that absolute knowing is already realized and existing in the world; his life-long engagement in teaching testifies to the very need to realize such knowledge, to have it pass from its grasp as “in-itself” and “for us” philosophers, to its grasp as effectively “for-itself.” Insofar as the need that animates philosophical discourse is nothing other than the activity of the Idea’s *logos* in its infinite vitality, we must conclude that this ultimate grasp is never, in Hegel’s eyes, completely realizable, that all objectivity can never be entirely true, can never be entirely Science. Otherwise, there would be no more thought, no more philosophy, no more *logos*, no more Idea. This is why Hegel’s project, while limiting itself to those contents worthy of philosophical discourse, also seems to recognize that there will always be things remaining to be discovered by the natural sciences, as well as works of art to be created, constitutions to be drafted, and individuals who will question church doctrine, carry out crime, fall into madness, remain in ignorance...

The idea that Hegel’s philosophy, in its opposition to modern Romanticism, is in contradiction with its own time highlights how the world of Science, comprehended as *true* objectivity, stands in relation to the everyday world. The world of Science does not claim to constitute the totality of all that exists, i.e. of all undetermined reality in its immediate diversity. Hegel’s world of Science is only constituted by that objectivity which has the Idea as its content: the written, lived, shared objects of the *Encyclopedia*. It is thus essential to understand that Hegel never denies the existence of the world that falls outside objective discourse (i.e. the world of common appearances); he never denies that we work, love, play and eventually die there. However, he does deny that the immediate,

everyday world of occurrence, *without being further articulated and reflected upon by thought*, can, as such, constitute the substantial content of Science.

While speculative Science can and must exist within a world that is foreign to it, Science is nonetheless injured by the ironic discourses of this world, to the extent that they undermine the objective discourses upon which Science rests. The first two of “the three presuppositions of our time,” namely that the world of appearances is all that there is, that there is no truth, and therefore that the truth has no objectivity, already deny the objectivity of the Idea, and hence, the Idea itself. Confronted with this trend, the Hegelian project seeks to overcome ironic Romanticism, to do so by making it an object of scientific interest, i.e. by incorporating it into the philosophical (systematic) expression of the Idea. However, the Idea and its discursive *logos* are precisely what romantic irony (and postmodernity) rejects.

Science’s project regarding ironic Romanticism reveals the following essential contradiction: while attempting to assimilate this rival movement, Science actually excludes its discourse, as well as its world, from the scientific domain. Indeed, when the fractured and fracturing discourse of irony takes aim at objective discourses, it stands outside and opposed to Science; and to the extent that it has no objective content, it escapes Science’s contentful grasp. In a way, it is this very exclusion that prevents the Hegelian critique, in its renewed attempts, from overcoming modern Romanticism. With regard to such a foreign object, Hegel’s critique can be seen as a force alternating between the centrifugal and the centripetal, ultimately running up against the impossibility of assimilating a discourse that refuses the *logos*, and therefore does not speak its language. A less honest philosophy would realize that the only way to overcome ironical discourse is to ignore it, to leave it out, and thus to render it mute and null.

Even if we accept that irony escapes the critical intentions of Hegel’s philosophy, which, although continually renewed, ultimately proves futile in addressing a form of thought that refuses sublation, such a constantly renewed effort shows that Hegel never renounces a definitive comprehension of that which remains foreign to his speculative enterprise. It is precisely this restlessness of thought concerning what is “other” that characterizes, as much as sought-after systematicity, Hegelian philosophy in its claim to expressing the liveliness of the Idea. The fact that the repercussions of Hegel’s critique reverberate to the very center of his philosophy ultimately demonstrates the strangeness of the object targeted.



In the introduction, I described Hegel's critique of the Early Romantics as both justified and unfaithful. When Hegel comprehends Schlegel's declarations as representing individual selfhood in its vain claim to a universal criticism, when Novalis's yearning unto death is understood as the expression of a profound nihilism, and when Schleiermacher's religion of feeling is seen as the result of the first two "presuppositions of our time," Hegel's critique displays a degree of justice. In other words, if we want to find, in these thinkers, three aspects of postmodernity, Hegel's interpretation seems justified.

However, this interpretation remains necessarily unfaithful. For, insofar as Hegelian thought is defined as objective content whose articulations are rethought and remembered in their ultimate meaning, modern Romanticism's ironic expression always finds itself outside of Hegel's systematic attempts, or always comes after the setting of the systematic sun.

## Coda 1: Galvanism and excitability in Friedrich Schlegel's theory of the fragment

Friedrich Schlegel was the co-founder of the journal *Athenäum*, which published six issues, in Jena, from 1798 to 1800. He collaborated on the journal with his older brother August Wilhelm, as well as with the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and the poet-philosopher Novalis. The *Athenäum* was the centre of what is called Early German Romanticism or Jena Romanticism. Philosophically, this movement and particularly its leader, Friedrich Schlegel, have been undervalued, perhaps as a result of Hegel's blistering condemnation.<sup>1</sup> Since then, German scholars Ernst Behler and Manfred Frank, and recently, American commentators like Frederick Beiser and Elizabeth Millan-Zeibert have contributed to a philosophical reevaluation of Friedrich Schlegel. More spectacularly perhaps, postmodern thinkers in the fields of literary theory and esthetics have sought out, in his writings, foundations or premonitions of their own work and tastes.<sup>2</sup> Such efforts are often inspired by Walter Benjamin's fundamental thesis, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* [*The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*],<sup>3</sup> where the ideas of the *Frühromantik* (Early German Romanticism) are accorded full esthetic and therefore philosophical importance.

Contemporary approaches to Schlegel's philosophy, particularly those in literary theory, tend to concentrate on his theory and practice of the literary fragment, as well as his pioneering thoughts on romantic irony, central aspects to his work during the brief *Athenäum* period. Postmodern theory finds itself at home in the fragmentary breaks and ruptures, in the ironic tension of contradiction, and in the unsystematic aspect of Schlegel's paradigmatic oeuvre, which tends to be interpreted, to use Maurice Blanchot's famous expression, as a non-totalizing *désœuvrement*. While it is generally acknowledged that Schlegel's fragments aspire to systematicity, they never approach anything as "totalized" as Hegel's system.<sup>4</sup> The fragmentary oeuvre is perpetually incomplete and therefore open.

Such a view of perpetually deferred accomplishment certainly conforms to what Schlegel means by romantic poetry. By his definition, it is a universal,

infinitely progressive, living work which never achieves completion, thus lending itself to a Neo-platonic interpretation, where poetry can be seen as expressing the endless human aspiration to return to “the very source of Being.”<sup>5</sup> The Neo-Platonic allusion allows Schlegel’s romantic poetry to be seen as both universal and incomplete, reflecting the ecstatic yearning that humanity feels in its attempts to know nature, not just in its manifold details, but as absolute. However, a modern reference is more informative of the romantic project.

Schlegel, like most German intellectuals in the last five years of the eighteenth century, was inspired by J. G. Fichte’s revolutionary grasp of selfhood. According to Fichte’s 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Science), the Absolute I is a self-positing activity of conscious mind in general that implies an oppositional Not-I, an objective otherness that it seeks to overcome in a process of endless, willful striving. The debt Schlegel’s esthetic ideas owe to Fichte’s seminal work is noted by almost every commentator, beginning with Hegel, who sees Schlegel as the individual personification of the self’s absolute pretensions. More positively, the Schlegel–Fichte relationship is emphasized by Benjamin and explored by more recent commentators.<sup>6</sup> While there is no doubt that Fichte’s dialectical grasp of subjectivity affected Schlegel as much as it did his philosophical contemporaries, it is far from forming the sole source of his inspiration. Schlegel’s writing of the *Athenäum* period also reflects other fundamental dimensions: his early philological interests, his indomitable critical sense, and, the subject of my discussion regarding his theory of the fragment, his interest in natural science.

Schlegel’s appropriation of Fichte is nonetheless foundational to his theory of the fragment and romantic poetry, although it remains strongly interpretive with regard to Fichte’s original project. This is not the place for a detailed examination of the discrepancies between the two philosophical visions, or to explicate the essential differences of temperament between the academic, single-minded author of the various editions and re-articulations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and the mercurial, playful author of romantic fragments.<sup>7</sup> For our purposes, it is enough to remark that in Fichte the Not-I is defined as a thoroughly abstract resistance which the I must encounter—both theoretically, as the condition of possibility for any object of knowledge, and practically, as the possibility for any object of the will.

While adopting the fundamental structure of an interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) between the self-positing I and the resistance it encounters in the Not-I, Schlegel nonetheless releases the movement from its Fichtean confines within the conscious mind and attributes it to nature itself. This move is likely inspired by

F. W. J. Schelling, a tangential member of the *Athenäum* circle, in his nascent *Naturphilosophie*,<sup>8</sup> where the free self-positing of the I becomes an expression of nature's infinite creativity. The Not-I can therefore occur in Schlegel (and in Schelling) as the conditioning self-limitation or resistance that the creative impulse of nature must encounter in order to actually produce its profusion of finite, diverse objects. The production of finite objects/things through conditioning resistance is particularly evocative in German, where "object" is that which "stands against" (*Gegenstand*), and where conditioning (*Bedingen*) brings about things (*Dinge*). Breaking free from Fichte's subjective idealism, the interplay of self-expansion and self-limitation now represents the very heartbeat of nature, and to the extent that "many we call artists are really nature's art" (CF 1),<sup>9</sup> artistic creation may partake of the same dynamic interplay.

The human spiritual endeavors of art and science participate in the act of "self-limiting [that is] the result of self-creation and self-negation" (CF 28). According to Schlegel's theory of the fragment, artists reproduce the interaction between the I and the Not-I in such a way that the expansive freedom of creativity actually produces real, individual objects of art. In fact, self-limitation becomes "the highest duty" of the artist "because one can only limit oneself at those places where one possesses infinite power, infinite self-creation" (CF 37).<sup>10</sup> In natural science, universal reciprocity between the self and otherness is expressed as the constant striving of free, expansive thought to recognize itself in the ambiguous otherness of nature through scientific knowledge. In both art and science, the richness of production draws upon the dynamic of nature itself. This shared source in the dialectic of the I and the Not-I is at the root of Early German Romanticism's deep affinity between the esthetic and the scientific fields, one profoundly alien to how art and science tend to be viewed today. An important element of current interest in the *Athenäum* period concentrates on this crucial, lost empathy, exploring the philosophical relation Schlegel and his circle develop between art and the natural sciences of their day. By examining the scientific side of the relation, through chemistry and its electrical repercussions in organic biology and medicine, we discover how Schlegel's richer, more sociable interpretation of the Fichtean dialectic plays itself out in the theory of the literary fragment.

Research in Romantic science is exemplified by Michel Chaouli's recent book on Schlegel and chemistry, and in Alison Stone's work on Schlegel, poetry and nature.<sup>11</sup> Each of these commentators examines how the eighteenth century's highly speculative science informs and mediates the Romantic ideas of both nature and poetry. As both authors remark, such scientific mediation

is only possible because of the quasi-poetical “mystifying aspect” (Stone, 16) of the day’s natural philosophy. Its discursive, descriptive character still fails to “submit to a mathematical model” (Chaouli, 99) which defines science today. Although both authors see the centrality of chemistry, each has his or her particular approach. In her article, Stone concentrates on chemistry as a means by which Schlegel re-enchants mechanical Enlightenment-style nature, in such a way that it can provide a ground for human creativity, through romantic poetry. Chaouli is more concerned with how the model of chemical reactions and experimentation allows Schlegel to develop his theory and practice of the literary fragment. Nonetheless, for both authors, it is the interplay between chemical elements, their “underlying connections and affinities” (Stone, 15) or their “combinatorial operations” (Chaouli, 84) that provide Schlegel with a metaphor for his use of the literary fragment and elaboration of romantic poetry. Recognizing the evolving scientific paradigm of the epoch, the authors explore how chemistry allows nature and art to be configured in a more dynamic and lively fashion than the previous mechanical epistemological model had allowed.

Chemistry is certainly essential to understanding Schlegel’s theory of the fragment and his idea of romantic poetry. As Schlegel writes, “The chemical nature of the roman, of criticism, of wit, of sociality, of modern rhetoric and of history up to now is evident” (A 426). However, it seems to me that both Stone and Chaouli ignore a fundamental element of that science, as it was grasped by the Romantics, and without which it is impossible to fully understand how Schlegel’s theory works. A satisfying approach to the question must introduce two additional dimensions that are necessary to this comprehension. First, rather than using chemistry as a means of re-enchanting nature, so that it may act as a source for human creativity (Stone) or as a metaphor for combinatory poetical practice (Chaouli), Schlegel sees chemistry as actually and metonymically present in the creative dynamic of the literary fragment itself. Further, the dynamic nature of the chemical reactions at play in the literary fragment only makes sense if we are sensitive to a crucial aspect of late eighteenth-century chemistry, which is missing from both Stone’s and Chaouli’s accounts: galvanic notions of electricity and their relation to organic medicine. Although it is true that eighteenth-century chemistry was fascinated by the combinations and elective affinities between chemical elements, it was also “mesmerized” by the contemporary discovery that chemical reactions could produce electrical energy, whose effects could be empirically witnessed in the dissected nervous and muscular fibers of animal organisms. Recognizing the importance of such

galvanic notions allows us to see how, for Schlegel, the universal, progressive poetry he calls romantic (A 116) is actually powered by electrochemical reactions, and how his ideas of the fragment, wit (*Witz*), irony and the *roman* work in concert to form a living organic whole. Consequently, it is the galvanic (electrical) aspect of chemical reactions that allows the fragment to transcend the chemical and attain the organic. If “the chemical epoch should be followed by an organic epoch” and if history has been chemical in nature only “up to now” (A 426), it is because chemical reactions are now known to produce electricity, which is inherently organic, and romantic! Of course, chemical galvanism is esthetically importable for Schlegel because it corresponds to the fundamental Fichtean paradigm of self-expansion and limitation that I outlined earlier, while further cohering with the popular theory of organic medicine put forward by John Brown, which I will discuss further.

It is easy to misunderstand the sense Schlegel ascribes to such technical terms as the fragment and irony, and to simply take them as purely literary expressions of romantic poetry’s essentially incomplete and self-contradictory nature, references to a system that is fragmentary because it is both fractured and non-totalizing, and ironic because, as a system, it is unsystematic. This misapprehension of how Schlegel actually uses the fragment and irony may also lead to the spurious conclusion that Schlegel’s theory of romantic poetry is itself somehow incomplete or fragmentary, whether because he was personally incapable of systematic thought (Hegel) or because he consciously refused it as not corresponding to his ideal of incompleteness. Most emphatically, however, it is not because we are dealing with a theory of the fragment and irony that the theory itself is unsystematic and incoherent, nor that our understanding of it must be fragmentary and ironic. A particular notion of galvanism and its medical extension in the concept of animal excitability are hermeneutically essential to Schlegel’s theory of the fragment and its role in romantic poetry. While the presence of these elements has been noticed in Schlegel’s writings,<sup>12</sup> it is important to see that since his romantic poetry actually participates in the life of nature, the sciences of nature must be more than a source of metaphor. In this context, theories of natural science are immediately theories of art and vice versa. This applies to Schlegel’s fragmentary project and its theory.

The theory of the fragment is found, first and foremost, in his fragments themselves, as they appear around the *Athenäum* period, between 1797 and 1800. Broader, less lapidary forms of expression, such as his essay “On Incomprehensibility,” which appeared in the last issue of that journal, and his novel *Lucinde*, published in 1799, do not represent an abandonment of the

fragmentary project. Rather, one of the aims of this paper is to show how they are themselves further fragmentary expressions, presupposed by the project's ultimate articulation as universal progressive poetry, which, as we will see, also remains fragmentary.

The natural ebb and flow of self-limitation and expansion can be speculatively applied throughout the natural sciences. In astronomy, the interplay of expansive centrifugal and limiting centripetal forces maintains planetary movement in constant orbits. In chemistry, acids and bases interact, creating new elements. Similarly, both magnetism and electricity are dynamic phenomena implying the existence of two opposing poles. At the organic level, the one Schlegel sees as animating the romantic epoch (A 426) and its productions of genius (A 366), the lively nature of contradiction is manifest in the discovery of chemically produced electricity. The insight into electrochemistry and its enigmatic relation to organic life, stemming from the work of Luigi Galvani, was conveyed to Schlegel by the brilliant, self-taught apothecary Johann Wilhelm Ritter. Ritter published his book *Proof that, in the Animal Kingdom, a Constant Galvanism Accompanies the Life Process*, in 1798, at 22 years of age. The book reprised his lecture/demonstration at the Natural History Society in Jena, the year before, which had created such a stir that Ritter was offered a professorship at the University. Schlegel's correspondence shows that he was so taken with the young physicist, introduced to the *Athenäum* circle by Novalis, that he intended to invite him to formally collaborate on the *Athenäum* (Ayrault, 70).

Through the 1790s, Luigi Galvani published numerous writings describing his experiments with "animal electricity." These involved bringing different metals into contact with the muscles and nerves of dissected animals, and observing how the fibers contracted or twitched. Galvani saw evidence, in such phenomena, of an electrical stream or fluid, inherent and active in organic tissues. According to his view, the metal probes caused the fibers to react by coming into contact with them and allowing the animal electricity to continue its flow. The problem was that Galvani's conclusion of a positive, electrical life force ran counter to prevalent ideas of animal irritability, championed by the influential Swiss physiologist Albrecht von Haller (1708–77), and further generalized and popularized, as excitability, by the Scottish medical doctor, John Brown (1735–88), whose *Elements of Medicine* had recently been translated into German (1795). Theories of irritability or excitability explain animal life as the inherent capacity to be sensitive to, or excited by outer stimulation. Adherents to this view tended to interpret Galvani's experimental findings as illustrating their theory. Muscle and nerve fibers were merely reacting to outer stimulation.

Electricity was not being produced and hence making the muscles jump. Galvani's manipulations were simply stimulating flesh's inherent vitality.

Inspired by experiments carried out by Alexander von Humboldt, Ritter produced a new theory that overcame the opposition between Galvani and Haller/Brown. Ritter put forward the idea that the electricity observed in Galvani's animal experiments was actually chemical in nature, produced through chemical reactions created by the differences in the types of metal brought into contact with the muscles or nerves. The proof was that distinct differences in the metals caused greater chemical and hence electrical activity. It was these findings that Ritter presented to the Jena scientific community in the above-mentioned lecture (1797, the year Schlegel produced his first series of fragments), drawing further conclusions in his 1799 article "Some Observations on Galvanism in Inorganic Nature and the Relationship between Electricity and the Chemical Quality of Bodies." Here, Ritter helps liberate chemical electricity from its animal confines and shows how it is generated through a chemical process of oxidation and reduction, involving two polarized metals in a distinct environment, paving the way for his invention of the dry-cell battery, in 1800.

Happily, Ritter's ideas on the chemical nature of electricity can be considered complementary to the Fichtean paradigm described earlier. Like other natural phenomena, chemically generated electricity follows the same logic that Schlegel and Schelling had found in the interaction between the I and the Not-I. The juxtaposition of two different metals can be considered a case of self-limitation through opposition, bringing about a conditioned, real result: electrical energy. Ritter's electrochemical theory, however, adds another significant element to the theory of the production of electricity, beyond the fact of productive opposition. The heterogeneous elements (metals) are necessarily brought together in a discrete, enclosed environment (eventually, the battery) in a state of conductive compression where chemical reactions take place in a spontaneous manner. Electrical sparks fly as the result of the fortuitous, internal chemical interactions that the compression produces.

Of course, neither the molecular nor indeed the atomic nature of these interactions was understood at the time. Electricity could not yet be grasped as the flow of charged electrons or ions. Consequently, the productive chemical combinations that Ritter and others saw as a source of electrical current were conceived according to the reigning model of the day: static electricity produced by the rubbing together of particular objects. In other words, the interactions that take place through the chemical combinations were understood as producing electrical energy through friction. Thus, while the chemistry of Schlegel's Early



Romantic period certainly relied on the combinatory nature of diverse elements, it is important to see that it is the “friction” of these chemical encounters, brought about by their “free sociality” (CF 34) within an enclosed space, that produces an electrical outcome, the spontaneous production of electricity.

The natural rhythm of expansion and conditioning resistance through opposition, together with discrete compression, efficient chemical interaction and electrical discharge are the fundamental, though largely occult, sources of Schlegel’s theory of the fragment. These elements explain how the theory actually works, by incorporating irony and wit as operational concepts. To grasp the theory of the fragment, it is therefore necessary to look at what Schlegel means by irony, to distinguish it from wit and see how both work together to produce the progression of romantic poetry.

The difficulty readers have in defining what exactly Schlegel means by the crucial concept of irony<sup>13</sup> makes it tempting to blur its definition with that of wit, which tends to be seen simply as an expression or type of the former. In fact, the two terms refer to concepts with distinct technical meanings that become clearer in light of the electrochemical framework discussed earlier. Accordingly, irony should be understood as the created, one might say engineered, compressive encounter between opposites. It is a “form” that is inherently “paradoxical” (CF 48), and as such, it “contains and excites the feeling of the insoluble conflict between the unconditioned and the conditioned...” (CF 108) Or again, “[irony is] an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the constant self-engendering exchange between two conflicting thoughts” (A 121). If we are attentive to Schlegel’s definitions, we see that wit is distinctly presented as an electrical “explosion” that results from ironic compression (CF 90). Thus, the forced intimacy of heterogeneous elements that takes place in irony fills the imagination “with all sorts of life before the electrifying moment can happen,” and gives forth “brilliant sparks, lustrous rays or thunderbolts” (CF 34). Drawing on the Fichtean and galvanic structures outlined earlier reveals how Schlegel understands irony in its relation to wit. Irony can be defined as a mechanism of compression, where opposing chemical elements are put in contact, in such a way that they interact and spontaneously generate wit, which occurs as an electrical discharge. This dynamic expansion limits itself in the singular form of the written fragment, which therefore is both the condition for the production of wit and the conditioned product of the process. Simply put, fragmentary wit produces new (witty) fragments.

Interestingly, this is also how wit is produced in society, and Schlegel understands wit as inherently sociable, not in a vertical, hierarchical fashion but

rather “horizontally,” as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use the term in their *Anti-Oedipus*. Salon society, like irony, brings together and combines diverse elements in a confined space; one thinks of the Berlin salon culture of Henriette Herz and Rahel Levin, where, in that propitious year of 1797, Schlegel met his future wife, Dorothea Veit, encountered Ritter, developed his cherished ideal of *Symphilosophie* and began writing fragments! Practically, the symphilosophical ideal involved the combining of different personalities in the relatively confined space of the *Athenäum* circle, stirring together Schelling, Schleiermacher, Hülsen, Baader, Tieck, Novalis and others. This is the dynamism of the “combinatory art” Schlegel refers to in some of his fragments, a literal social alchemy, ironically combining diverse elements that then interact in a frictional, fortuitous way, producing sparks of wit. In fact, he seems to have delighted in engineering possibilities of personal opposition within the group, for example attempting to confront Schleiermacher’s religiosity with Schelling’s Epicurean confessions. The collaborative journal *Athenäum* is the manifestation of this social chemistry, and the soul of the *Athenäum* is the fragment.

Although Schlegel’s fascination with the written fragment comes from his reading of Sebastien Roche Nicholas Chamfort’s *Pensées, maximes et anecdotes*, published in 1795, he quickly invests it with an ontological status far beyond that of an arbitrary literary form. The fragment is both the self-limiting figure implied by free, creative expansion and the privileged space of ironic compression for the production of electrochemical wit. The duality of this role, as both product and productive, as both a result and a condition, means the fragment participates in the infinite progression that is romantic poetry. The written fragment produces the real conditions for compression, friction and expansive, witty sparks that are equally at play in the literary salon, in the hermetic, chemical cell battery, and in poetico-philosophical expression, which, like any artistic expression, must always be limited or contained in an individual art form. Hence the witty fragment is rigorously structured; it is a “world” in itself (I 213), or, as Schlegel writes in A 383, ironically echoing Kant’s systematic aspirations in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, wit should be architectonic.

Witz is the animating energy of the fragment only if the latter is grasped correctly. Schlegel’s romantic fragment is not to be seen as a broken off piece or part of a pre-existing totality. Rather, it is itself a self-contained, singular organism—one Schlegel compares to the invitingly approachable yet hermetically prickly hedgehog (A 206)!

It might appear that the individual nature of the fragment and the instantaneous aspect of wit stand opposed to any attempt at system. However,

the ironic use of the term “architectonic” implies a world-producing power in wit that outstrips the creation of individual fragments. Schlegel’s project is clearly to produce systems of fragments, systems like those of his *Ideas*, his early Critical Fragments or his *Athenäum* Fragments. According to Schlegel’s theory as presented here, these ensembles are not simply arbitrary series, but form coherent and organic *romans*, as does, in a different way, his fragmentary novel, *Lucinde*. All these systems are formed through ironic self-contradiction and are therefore, in their particular ways, fragments. *Lucinde* is just as much an ironic take on the systematic pretensions of the novel as the series of *Athenäum* fragments represents an ironic take on the philosophical system.

Following the same natural pulse of compression and expansion found within the discrete, witty fragment itself, such romantic systems as the ironic novel or the series of fragments, themselves form larger architectonic fragments where diverse elements are again compressed and combined to produce further electrochemical reactions. In other words, the system of fragments is driven by the same dynamic conditions that drive the singular literary fragment itself, the production of wit and the reproduction of new systems of fragments, new *romans*, new fragmentary systems, and so on. The entire process is the universal, progressive spiritual oeuvre that Schlegel calls romantic poetry, where “the greatest systems of art [contain] within themselves still further systems” (A 116). There is obviously an organic, living quality to such a self-moving system, and to understand this quality, we must conclude with a brief look at how the electrochemical dimension of Schlegel’s theory of the fragment is linked to a theory of organic medicine.

The organic quality of Schlegel’s idea of the fragment is reflected in the title of Novalis’ series, “Grains of Pollen,” which appears in the first issue of *Athenäum* and includes, symphilosophically, four fragments written by Schlegel. The fragment, like the grain of pollen, should be seen as fertile and indeed seminal, something productive of new organic worlds. The ironic system, for Schlegel, is truly alive or, more precisely, it is alive on an organic level—one that incorporates and goes beyond the internal electrochemical reactions of its constituents (A 426) to form a living, engendering organism, where individual artists can be seen as “nature’s art”(CF 1).

Endlessly dynamic, the universal, progressive romantic poem is, of course, itself self-contradictory, alive in the ironic compression of being both systematic and the greatest fragment of all. The living, organic nature of such systematic incompleteness implies a particular relation to the otherness that lies outside itself, to a Not-I that is more than a self-imposed limitation. In the natural

sciences, with which we are dealing here, the relation between an (always incomplete) organic system and the otherness of its environment is the subject matter of medicine. This brings us, as promised earlier, to John Brown's theory of organic life and medicine, and its notions of excitability and stimulation. The reference shows how the electrochemical nature of wit, drawing upon the dialectic of the Fichtean self and its other, fuels a process (romantic poetry) that is alive and reproductive.

Scottish physician John Brown's theory was much in vogue in Germany following the translation of his work, in 1795. Brown's ideas responded to a general requirement for the natural sciences of the time: the need to find a unique principle of organic medicine that was as universal in scope as Newton's laws of mechanics. As well, the conceptual simplicity of Brown's theory lent it a certain republican, even revolutionary flavor, which must have accounted, to some extent, to its popularity in post-Kantian Germany.

Although its applications and diagnostics were doubtlessly arcane and often dangerous, for example Schelling's "Brunonian" treatment of the young Augusta Böhmer in Jena seems to have led to her death, Brown's theory itself was painfully simple. Animal vitality (health) is seen as dependent on a level of organic excitability, a concept similar to Haller's irritability. Excitability represents the degree to which an organism can react to external stimulus. Highly excitable states bring about sthenic pathologies, while asthenic conditions are characterized by weakness and lethargy. Most diseases are considered asthenic, and consequently, treatment involves increased levels of stimulation, for example through such external agents as red meat, alcohol and laudanum. These external stimuli are meant to solicit a response from the patient. In some cases, indirect asthenic pathologies may arise as a result of over-stimulation. Such conditions require what may be described as a homeopathic treatment where depressants are administered to the depressed (asthenic) patient in order to solicit the contrary response and provoke vital excitability. Brown's theory sees life as a fragile, ephemeral state of excitation, only temporarily and uncertainly held from stillness and dissolution through the imperfect intervention of external, stimulating agents.<sup>14</sup>

As John Neubauer shows, both Schelling and Novalis were fascinated and influenced by Brown's ideas, but only because the philosophers were able to interpret the material relation between excitability (life) and foreign stimulation as a Fichtean relation between the I and the Not-I (Neubauer, 375–6). In fact, as Neubauer also points out, both philosophers react strongly against the perceived mechanical nature of Brown's theory of medicine when left on its own.

When applied to the Fichtean conceptual structure, however, Brown's idea of organic vitality as the capacity for external stimulation adds a new distinguishing characteristic to the increasingly determinate Not-I. Rather than being seen as a general limiting condition through which a specific self-positing I becomes effective or the further condition of ironic compression necessary for the production of electrical wit, the Not-I now plays the active, determined role of a particular stimulus that actually solicits and excites the self-positing of the I. Applied to the organic, living entity of romantic poetry, Brown's paradigm leads to the recognition that otherness has an actual role in creative self-expression, adding the real quality of reciprocal selfhood to Schlegel's appropriation of the hitherto faceless Not-I.

When superimposed on Ritter's electrochemical discoveries, Brown's idea that life results from external solicitation adds a rich, almost personal dimension to the concept of limiting ironic compression, which can now be seen as a form of otherness that stimulates the vitality of the creative self. Together, these elements underlie Schlegel's symphilosophical *Athenäum* project and help constitute his theory of romantic poetry.<sup>15</sup> It is a living, systematic fragment, universal and yet, ironically, progressing toward completion. As both system and fragment, as both self-contained and yet relying on otherness in order to live, it answers perfectly to Brown's idea of the living organism.

To conclude, Schlegel's theory acknowledges the agency of otherness in the generation of fragments, whether these are taken in their most discrete, aphoristic embodiment or in the larger systems they form, in the roman or in romantic poetry itself. For the fragment to be a living organism and for romantic poetry to be powered by the sparks of electrochemical wit, otherness must be thought of as an exciting "thou."

At the level where such progressive, universal poetry operates, stimulating otherness can take the general form of a Not-I, of a self-limitation or of a "sense of chaos outside the system" (I 55), "from which a world may spring" (I 213). In the individual artist, however, this "sense" takes a more particular form, where it is "the excitation of the smallest contact, friend or enemy" that draws from the creative imagination "brilliant sparks, lustrous rays or thunderbolts" (CF 34). Finally, for the romantic writer of witty fragments and ironic systems, the exciting other is, above all, the critical reader, the thou for whom he writes, and who can never fully comprehend.<sup>16</sup>

## Coda 2: Reflections on Novalis's *Logological Fragments*

The *Logological Fragments*, from *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, translated and edited by Margaret Mahony Stoljar (State University of New York Press, 1997) are taken from Novalis's unpublished notebooks. They were probably written between 1798 and 1800, at the time of the *Athenäum* review. The fragments are divided into two sub-series (I and II).

### *Logological fragments I*

This series of fragments begins and ends with a reflection on philosophy. Between the beginning and the end, we discover the *essence* of poetry. As is the case in Aristotle and in Hegel, the middle, particular term of the syllogism is where essence is discovered. Here, in Novalis, the poetic middle term truly acts as a mediation. That is, philosophy, as it appears at the end of the first series, is now presented, fully realized and essential, in terms of "art." This is possible because philosophy has taken on or been mediated by poetry, by the poetical verb. The final term of philosophy, as an art form, can also be thought of as a newly established harmony, one that has occurred between the creative imagination (in the form of poetry) and the understanding (philosophy). This final harmony is a lively synthesis, like the one witnessed in Schiller's *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man*, where, building on Kant's idea of esthetic judgment, and adding Karl Reinhold's concept of "Trieb (drive)," the intuitive imagination (*Sinnestrieb*) engages in free play (*Spieltrieb*) with the understanding (*Formtrieb*). Or, we might say that Novalis's idea is to present Leibniz's posited harmony between the Godly (infinite) and the worldly (finite), not as pre-established but as the discursive result of an immediate (intellectual) intuition. This, Novalis describes as the ultimate goal of philosophy, which has always sought to unite logic and metaphysics; thought with the unconditioned (15) (i.e. fragment 15).

In 20/21, we discover how philosophy, in its mediating journey through poetry, must begin with an inward journey, which might be described, in the

natural science terminology of the time, as a centripetal movement, as opposed to a centrifugal one, which will come later. First, as we have seen in 18, one must seek within oneself. However, this inward centripetal movement ultimately opens outward, through the expressive poetic verb, which is centrifugal.

The linguistic aspect involves the idea of *logos*. However, here “the word” is taken not just in the philosophical meaning of “reasoned discourse,” but in the biblical sense that we find in the Gospel according to John, where the Word creates the world. In 18, what is sought within us is “the absolute copula” (the verb “to be” that joins subject to predicate), i.e. the primitive unity between thought and world, expressed as an act of language. This act should be understood, as well, in Fichtean terms. Fichte is explicitly mentioned in 20. The absolute copula is the dynamic unity between the I and itself as other, as the object of its reflection:  $I = I$ ;  $I = \sim I$ . The speculative nature of the copula, in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, was also a source of inspiration for Hölderlin, in his short but pivotal text “Judgment and Being,” and hence in Hegel and Schelling. The copula must be the identity of identity and difference.

The Fichtean dimension, here, allows philosophy, as a journey inwards, to be thought of as a voyage of self-cultivation, in the sense of *Bildung*, and of self-realization through self-reflection. However, Novalis re-interprets Fichte’s equations, rendering them ambiguous or, perhaps, dialectical.

In Fichte, the foundation of *theoretical* knowledge is the self as determined by the not-self (i.e. nature, in Kantian terms), and practical (moral) determination takes place through the self as determining the not-self. Contrarily, in Novalis, the self as determined by the not-self is practical (moral). The determination of the self by the not-self should be thought of as an experience, as an apprenticeship—a formation by the not-self which represents a higher, greater selfhood, unlike the not-self for Fichte, which is just conditioning resistance against the self-positing I.

For Novalis, the philosophical journey inwards implies this meeting with, and determination by, the higher self. This is practical. Now, the self as determining the not-self (practical for Fichte) becomes the expression of theoretical knowing. This implies that theoretical knowing should be understood as an active communication with a higher being, with the not-self, with Nature that is not simply an empty form of existence. So, here, we witness a crucial turn from Kantian nature, as that which is not-mind/spirit/reason, to Nature as a godly, living whole. However, it should be noted that, here, we see that nature is not immediately expressive. It is rather occult and secretive. Knowing represents an active engagement with nature, a communication aimed

at eliciting its secret, godly essence, theoretical thinking initiates a dialogue aimed at getting Nature to talk back and reveal itself.

Such communication is outward-directed. It is the highest principle of art and knowledge (59). Communication with the higher not-self is the essence of poetry, of the poetical word, which is magical, a conjuring, a mediation between the infinite and the finite. This outward movement or communication with the ideal self is brought about by philosophy. It can be thought of as “a conversation with oneself” if we think of it as taking place between the ‘real’ self and the ideal or higher self.

However, although the philosophical conversation begins with a theoretical aspect, an active knowledge of the not-self (which seemed distinct from the moral aspect), where the not-I responds to or conditions the I, the esthetic, poetical element brings together the theoretical and the moral dimensions. To put this more clearly, the not-I, which is the object of philosophy, is not merely a passive object but rather, even as a not-(my)self, it remains a self. Thus it actively solicits the I which then seeks to know it. Philosophy is a challenge, a gauntlet thrown down by the higher self (the not-I, nature, the ideal self). Philosophy is an “arousal of the real self through the ideal self.” Here, we have an explicit articulation of Brownian logic (see Coda 1 on Schlegel). The not-self solicits or stimulates the “real” self into conversation. This is an “invitation au voyage” (Beaudelaire) that the philosopher takes up and experiences—this is self-formation, and so what was theoretical turns out to be moral, through the mediation of the esthetical (poetical).

Philosophy begins as an individual activity—an intellectual contemplation that shares in godly self-contemplation and joy (Aristotle–Spinoza). The philosophical communication between the real self and the ideal self takes the linguistic form of poetry. The poet’s words are “magic.” Words are incantations. They reach beyond the individual and become communal, public, worldly.

The poet uses the words of common usage—and makes them magical, just as he renders the world magical. Poetry is also world-historical (28): the savage, primal, naïve poem becomes the epic, then the (romantic) novel (28), which is poetic in this grand sense, i.e. in the sense of Schlegel’s idea of romantic poetry as universal and progressive (see Coda 1 on Schlegel), although Novalis expresses this differently, here, as transcendental poetry.

Poetry is universal, in that it is the elevation of the human being, of humanity, above itself (36). The future is transcendental poetry—organic poetry, which is a mixture of poetry and philosophy, a synthesis of the two, in which philosophy becomes art (37). The (moral) mission of the philosopher is to become a poet (43). The truly moral person is a poet. This is because the move to the inner, to



the centre, i.e. the individual philosophical quest, the conversation with the ideal self, must express itself outwardly, in transcendental poetry (see *Logological Fragments* II, 8). Such poetry is moral in that it makes the Good (the godly, the ideal) actual.

Transcendental poetry is the poetry of the future. It goes beyond the historical categories of ancient, modern, and “interesting.” It is transcendental in the Kantian sense: i.e. like Kant’s forms, it is both subjective and universal. Transcendental poetry takes root in the inner dialogue of the philosopher. Novalis expresses it as a self-enjoyment, sharing in the godly joy of self-contemplation. Transcendental poetry is a self-embrace, expressed as a first kiss, the stimulating kiss of promise between the real self and the ideal self (ideally, listening to Mozart’s song “Wenn die Liebe in deinen blauen Augen...”). This is the basis of poetical communication.

The goal of transcendental poetry, as the poetry of the future, is nonetheless the (re-)creation of a Golden Age. However, it is an error to think that this age actually existed, and that poetry yearns simply for the past (as Catholic, Medieval, chivalrous, etc.). The Golden Age is an ideal world created through the poetic transformation of the real world. It is the world where everything has become magical in its meaning. The finite becomes infinite (66); the known becomes unknown; the ordinary becomes mysterious. In fact, this is what Novalis does with the particular individual who was Sophie; “Sophie or Religion—same thing,” writes Novalis. The poetical ambiguity of singular realities, which become mediators between the poet and the godly, is a feature of Jacob Böhme’s Christology, where the singular figures of Jesus, the Holy Virgin, Adam and Eve become confused, as one mediating figure of the divine.

The world must be made Romantic (66) through the poetic verb. The commonplace must be endowed with original meaning. The finite must be made infinite, through spiritual penetration. The mind penetrates the things of the world—a type of fire—transforming them into meaningful, magical things.

Poetry transforms the things of the world and makes them magical—a harmonic madness—a madness “governed by rules and in full consciousness.” As in Schiller’s *Letters*, harmony involves mad sentiment and order, or in one of Hegel’s Jena (“Wastebok”) aphorisms, where the Bacchanalian dance of pure thought requires understanding (*Verstand*) to set the rhythm, count the time.

For Novalis, in the magical world created by the poetic word, everything is symbolic, an analogy; everything is a mediator/medium between the finite and the infinite (72). Consequently, “I” am just such an analogy, just such a symbol. The relation between my real self and my ideal self, between my body and my

soul, one might say, is the same as the relation between the world and the world-soul. Thus, the first series of *Logological Fragments* ends with the individual, and therefore with the idea of philosophy as the understanding of the self, Socrates's "gnoti sauton," the self-embrace, the self-communication, the *invitation au voyage* that is the journey of self-formation and self-discovery.

However, now we see ourselves in artistic terms, as a story whose significance we have written through art, through the artistic divination of life's meaning. Immediate life has been penetrated, burned and reborn as an illusion, as an artistic illusion, as a novel that is self-written, full of magic and significance (99). Death is the end of natural life, but such finitude bespeaks the possibility of rebirth in the poetic verb, just as Marcel Proust's poetic verb, in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, renders his singular, finite, natural life poetical.

Thus, everything is seed, *Blumenstaube* (Grains of Pollen), as Novalis called another series of fragments. Such poetical seeds are for cultivation—the seeds of future self-cultivation, giving rise to philosophy, poetry, and finally, to philosophical art or artistic philosophy (100), and a newly conjured world.

### ***Logological fragments II***

There are many intuitions here that may be taken as Hegelian. At least in this series of fragments, we certainly find forms of thought that seem to resemble Hegel's fundamental take on the dynamic relation between thought and nature. However, it is important to stress the fragmentary aspect of these *intuitions*, in Novalis. If there is systematicity there, it is something supplied by the reader, who, as we see in Schlegel's idea of romantic poetry, is very much meant to participate in the "universal" project.

The idea that everything is contained in the first immediate moment, that the truth is already there, within, but is only developed and clarified afterwards (10), resembles the in-itself of the concept, in Hegel. Both thinkers embrace a circular epistemology, one that posits the truth, as an (intellectual) intuition, at the outset, and then proceeds to a demonstration, which arrives back at the initial intuition, now "proven" or carried out. In literary terms, the voyage is an *Odyssey*, a *Bildungsroman*.

In 15 and 17, Novalis presents the essential relation of language and spirit. We find the idea of a history of language, reflecting the popular question, at the time, (particularly, after Rousseau) concerning the origin of language. Novalis sketches out a progression, from the first natural utterances, characterized as the rough sounds of nature, to higher forms, which are increasingly artificial and

therefore more spiritual, symbolic, poetical: “All sounds produced by nature are rough—and empty of spirit.”

This view is similar to Hegel’s and runs against the more typically pre-romantic idea, found in Rousseau and Herder, that the primal, natural utterances are somehow more pure, more essential, more true, because they are closer to nature (the source of the essential, the pure, the true). This view is closer to the phonocentrism criticized by Derrida than is the position he seems to attribute to Hegel.

The opposing vision, of Novalis, is Böhmanian and shared by Hegel: Spirit arises from dead nature. This is the mystery of the Trinity, where the natural Jesus Christ must die in order to be resurrected as Spirit. However, in Hegel, it is Scientific *logos* that brings about the “second nature” of Spirit. In Novalis, philosophy operates the transition but taken as the poetic verb, the artistic communication that engenders a new world, as we saw in the first series of fragments, above.

Through poetic language, we re-spiritualize nature, by killing its alien form. This means that first we must grasp nature as separate, as a not-I, “separating himself from his body” (17). Nature may take the form of an encyclopedic, systematic index or “plan of our spirit” (27), but in order to for it to do so, the contents of such a system demand our engagement: “we must examine them, work with them and use them.” We must not forget Novalis’s own engagement with the “philosophy of nature” of his time, through his friendship with the young physicist Ritter, and in his own activities as a mining engineer. However, as we see in his unfinished novel, *Henry of Ofterdingen*, even such prosaic, technological activities as mining can or must be expressed poetically, thus rendering nature magical.

The goal is to recognize oneself in nature (behind the veil). First we must see nature as alien, and then we must penetrate nature with the verb. As we see in 29, the aim is to know oneself in otherness. Again, we see the similarity with Hegel’s journey of consciousness, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: absolute self-knowledge (of the absolute, by the absolute) through the activity of spirit.

Novalis: Poetry, the poetic verb, issued from philosophical contemplation, is an “indeterminate art,” (31) one that forgoes mere things (*Dinge*) and dwells in pure ideas. Regarding poetry: in “realizing pure ideas [it is] vivified by pure ideas [; it is] an end in itself, a self-satisfying activity of spirit, self-enjoyment of the spirit.” Again, likening the process to what we find in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, in Novalis, we see how spirit overcomes all its specific forms and enjoys itself in the ultimate suppression of the difference between the self and nature, bringing

about the Aristotelian, Spinozistic joy, adopted by Hegel with reference to the Idea, at the end of his *Encyclopedia*. Similarly, in Novalis, the self-enjoyment of spirit is presented in encyclopedic, systematic terms, as a philosophy that “combines all philosophies into a single philosophy.”

Language is conceived as fundamentally spiritual (36); it is an instrument of knowledge, an organ or a tool, and, above all, an expressive mediation between self and the world, transforming the world into something more interesting than mere nature. When we express something, we make it into language. Once again, however, what we are bringing about, through the poetic verb, is not something new, but something that was there, at the beginning, as a holistic intuition, and which has always been there. Again, this is necessary for any truly systematic philosophy (circular epistemology).

The idea of a primal, original Truth, which must be re-discovered through the spiritualizing action of the poetic/philosophical verb, implies a degree of nostalgia for this lost wholeness—a nostalgia (*Sehnsucht*) that drives us on to the goal, which is the return to the Golden Age, but now resurrected, fully spiritualized (54). The idea of a Golden Age implies an idea of the Fall, of decadence, and we find this expressed in 3 and 18. The Golden Age means that nature *has always been* a verb, a communication; it has always been, in itself, a true revelation of the spirit, but we somehow lost the ability to read this expression, the ability to grasp this revelation of spirit in the world. We have become weak and sickly (3,18).

And yet, the idea of the Golden Age also means that there are higher powers in us, memories “that guide us along this arduous path” (3), back to what we have lost, a Golden Age, a fairy world, where everything is godly revelation. Now, I must make sense of the world, I must spiritualize the world through words. Enchant the world. In this way, I transform the world into “the result of a mutual effect between myself and the divine being” (52). In other words, through the poetical verb of philosophy, through the communication between my particular self and the ideal self, I transform the world into that original state, in which I may recognize myself.

This happens through poetry, through magical words that call into being the spirit that was immediately present to the “first spirit-seer,” i.e. in the “fresh gaze of the child,” with which the series begins, and which is now rediscovered. As in Nietzsche, the final stage of human existence is the child, whose marvelous look philosophy seeks to regain, through the conjuring, poetic verb, whereby it becomes one with art.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 Again in the aim of making available the richness of Romantic thought and putting into perspective the Hegelian interpretation, reference will be made to such indispensable studies as Roger Ayrault, *La genèse du romantisme allemand*, vol. 3 (Paris: Aubier, 1969).
- 2 Walter Benjamin's thesis, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, 1920.
- 3 1956.
- 4 The idea of a *Goethezeit* may have provided, among other things, the academic distance necessary in treating Hegel and the Romantics in post-war Germany.
- 5 This is the procedure adopted by Ernst Behler in his article "Friedrich Schlegel und Hegel" and Emanuel Hirsch in his "Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels Phänomenologie." See below.
- 6 The *Athenäum* review (Jena, 1798–1800) is, more than any other writing, central to the thought of Early German Romanticism. The contents of the review revolve around the collaboration (the "Symphilosophie") of Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher. For Hegel, the fourth main participant in the review, A. W. Schlegel, enjoys a different status than his brother Friedrich. August Wilhelm is only indirectly associated with irony.
- 7 During Hegel's Frankfurt period. See *Hegel's theologische Jugendschriften*, p. 376. The concept of love is initially seen by Hegel as an expression of unicity. As such it will be progressively replaced by Reason and then Spirit. Cf. H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development* vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 324–6.
- 8 The contemporary or actual character of romantic irony, as an expression of modern individuality, distinguishes it from what might involve more general or systematic considerations of irony in Hegel, where it might be taken as an expression of dialectical negativity. Hence, for example, Hegel's reading of Socrates or his presentation of K.W.F. Solger is not my concern here. For a discussion of Hegel's grasp of speculative irony in Solger, see the preface to my *Hegel: L'ironie romantique. Compte rendu des écrits posthumes et correspondance de Solger* (Paris: Vrin, 1997).

## Chapter 1

- 1 I will use the name Schlegel exclusively for Friedrich. When reference is made to his older brother, August Wilhelm, I will add his given names or initials.
- 2 Ernst Behler, "Fr. Schlegel und Hegel," *Hegel-Studien*, 2, (1963), pp. 203–40.
- 3 Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (thesis). (Bonn: 1956), pp. 186–227.
- 4 Behler, p. 204.
- 5 This opinion is also found in Emanuel Hirsch, "Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels Phänomenologie," *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 2 (1924), pp. 510–32.
- 6 "Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels Phänomenologie," p. 521, where the addition to §164 of the *Philosophy of Right* is also discussed.
- 7 Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, section [s.] 667. *Werke in 20 Bänden [Werke]* 3, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 490.
- 8 Behler, p. 250.
- 9 In his letter to von Raumer (1816) on the teaching of philosophy in universities, Hegel writes, "But I was still present in Jena for the grand entrance of Fr. Schlegel, with his course on transcendental philosophy. He had finished his course in six weeks—not to the satisfaction of his listeners, who had paid for a course lasting six months and had paid accordingly." Hegel, *Letters* (letter 278). According to Pöggeler, pp. 188–9, Hegel's accusation may not be entirely founded since, by only arriving at Jena in January, he could only have witnessed the second half of Schlegel's course, the part actually dealing with transcendental philosophy. According to Pöggeler, Hegel's unfavorable opinion was influenced by Schelling, whom Schlegel had replaced at the university. It is noteworthy that Hegel's letter does not seem to imply that he himself attended Schlegel's course.
- 10 A polemic does require at least two sides and as Behler writes, "Erst in den späten Lebensjahren, seit 1820, als Schlegel mit der Ausbildung seiner Philosophie zum Ziel gekommen war, scheint er sich mit Hegel intensiver beschäftigt zu haben." Behler, p. 204. It appears that the two men only met once, at Tieck's house in Dresden, in 1824, and Hegel, as he wrote to his wife, didn't seem to have recognized his adversary. "Last evening, I went to Tieck's house where I met Professor Hinrichs [...] as well as Mr. Friedrich von Schlegel; but it is only after he had left that I realized it was him." *Letters* (letter 484). This might be evidence contradicting the assertion that Hegel had attended Schlegel's lectures at Jena. Otherwise, we might suppose he would have recognized Schlegel, even 23 years later. In the meanwhile, Hegel had had the opportunity to condemn, again in his letters, Schlegel for his support of the Austrian Emperor, whose armies had just been defeated by Napoleon.

On the other hand, the opposing liberation—the one championed by Friedrich Schlegel and the Catholicizing of us all—failed lamentably, and he should count himself lucky to have escaped being put to the stake. As Fr. Schlegel has here many people of his ilk, unemployed riff-raff of no fixed address, this rabble raised a cry of ‘Vivat’ in honor of a troop of Uhlans [Imperial cavalry] who entered here.

Letter to Niethammer, May 7, 1809. Cf. Pöggeler, p. 190.

- 11 Hegel’s letters, quoted above, to Niethammer (1809), on Schlegel’s Catholicism and Imperialist activities, and to von Raumer (1816) on the teaching of philosophy in universities.
- 12 “At last we are forever rid of all this mess,” continues the letter from 1809.
- 13 Baader’s research into mysticism (Tauler, Jakob Böhme, Eckhart) strongly influenced Novalis. Hegel’s criticism of Baader, in Nuremberg and Heidelberg, was entirely epistolary and unpublished, allowing him to meet Baader in Berlin, in 1822, and maintain friendly relations with him for the rest of his life. Ernst Benz quotes a passage from Hoffmann, the publisher of Baader’s complete works, where he is said to have read for Hegel, in 1824, a text from Meister Eckhart, “whom he had only known, until then, the name,” and which apparently inspired Hegel. Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande*, (Paris: Vrin, 1987 [first edition, 1968]), p. 12. On the other hand, H.S. Harris, referring to Rosenkranz, claims that Hegel studied Eckhart and Tauler from 1796. H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Development*, 1, *Towards the Sunlight*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 230.
- 14 *Phenomenology*, s. 51, 52. *Werke* 3, pp. 50–1. Here, in the Preface, Hegel insists upon the conceit, the geniality and the vanity of this approach, terms that I will develop further with respect to Schlegel.
- 15 The element of mastery is clear in the original German of Hegel’s letter to von Raumer, which can also be found in Hegel’s Heidelberg writings on education. “Wer in dieser Art nur drucken lässt, has noch den Vorteil des Glaubens des Publikums, dass er auch über die Ausführung solcher allgemeinen Gedanken Meister sei,” *Werke* 4, p. 420.
- 16 *Werke* 7, pp. 285–6. Unless indicated, the translations are my own. The Hegel texts on Schlegel are discussed in chronological order, although, as I mentioned in the Introduction, all non-epistolary references occur in Hegel’s Berlin period.
- 17 Schlegel: “The French Revolution, Fichte’s Doctrine of Science and Goethe’s Meister are the greatest tendencies of the age.” *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* [FS], 2, p. 195. *Athenäum* fragment [A] 216. For the translation of Schlegel’s fragments, which I sometimes alter slightly, see Peter Firchow, trans. and intro., *Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde and the Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971). Between 1797 and 1800, Schlegel wrote three sets of fragments, his term for what might also be known as aphorisms: his “Critical Fragments,” in the review *Lyceum*, his *Athenäum* Fragments and his Ideas, also in the review *Athenäum*, and which are an extension of the fragment.

For a discussion of Schlegel's theory of the fragment and its relation to his theory of irony (not Hegel's interpretation of it!), see Coda 1 of this book. Many are the commentators on romantic irony who seem to have accepted this Fichtean point of departure without looking further. To cite only two noteworthy examples. Richard Rudolf Haym, *Die Romantische Schule*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961 [1870]), pp. 259–60: "Nichts Anderes als die Anwendung dieses von Fichte systematische durchgeführten Gedankens auf die ästhetische Welt ist die Lehre von der Ironie." Also I. Strohschneider-Kohrs, "Die romantische Ironie" in *Die deutsche Romantik*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967) p. 80: "Das Denkmodell, das hinter dieser Vorstellung steht, ist unschwer zu erkennen: es ist der von Fichte in der Wissenschaftslehre erörterte Gedanke vom Handeln der Intelligenz, von der Aktion des Selbstbewusstseins." I will show that Hegel's critique of romantic irony finds its source earlier than Fichte, in Kant. Schlegel: "Fichte's *Doctrine of Science* is a philosophy on the material furnished by Kantian philosophy [...] It might very well be that [Fichte] is a Kant raised to the second power and that the *Doctrine of Science* is a lot more critical than it appears to be [...] and besides, one can never be too critical," *FS*, 2, p. 213. A 281.

- 18 Of course, Schlegel's irony is itself a difficult concept to grasp, although I attempt to do so in Coda 1. Schlegel: "Irony is the clear consciousness of the eternal agility of infinitely fecund chaos," *FS*, 2, p. 263. Idea [I] 69. "Philosophy is the real homeland of irony, which one would like to define as logical beauty," *FS*, 2, p. 152. *Lyceum* fragment [L] 42. "Irony is a form of paradox. All that is both good and great is paradox," *FS*, 2, p. 153. L 48. Indeed the difficulty in defining Schlegel's irony seems to stem from its nature as contradictory. Reducing irony to the Fichtean model is, in any case, rather violent. This is also Ernst Behler's opinion, p. 217, who quotes Oskar Walzel on Hegel's critique (*Romantisches*, 1934, p. 73.): "Ein ganz Grosser, Hegel sagt aus blindem Hass Falsches über F. Schlegels romantische Ironie."
- 19 *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 140 Remark. *Werke* 7, pp. 277–8.
- 20 "Meister über das Gesetz und die Sache," and in the margins, "Virtuosität, Genialität—Meister des Sittlichen," *Werke* 7, p. 279.
- 21 "Virtuosität, Genialität—Meister des Sittlichen."
- 22 *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*, 1822. Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs was born in 1794 and studied with Hegel at Heidelberg. He was one of the earliest converts to Hegelianism, to teach Hegel's thought, and to write an original work inspired by Hegel's system. See Eric von der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Religion*, (Lewiston/Queenston, Mellen Press, 1987), p. 1. The book comprises a valuable translation of the Hegel's preface. I will refer extensively to the preface in my chapter on Schleiermacher. In a letter to Hegel (October 14, 1820), Hinrichs makes reference to an unpublished copy of the *Philosophy of Right* that Hegel had sent to him, and specifically to the note (not to the Addition, of course,



which was only published later) to paragraph 140. Hinrichs writes, “It is thanks to this note that I have really understood for the first time what is irony.”

- 23 The expression “unearthed again” (“wieder hervorgesucht”) seems to indicate that the term *Weltweisheit* had fallen out of fashion since the time when Hegel himself used it to qualify himself as “der Weltweisheit Doktor” in his *Difference Between the Philosophical Systems of Fichte and Schelling* (1801), for example. Hegel relates the term “Weltweisheit” to Schlegel again in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (*Werke* 18, p. 81), where the text from the Preface to Hinrichs’ work is repeated almost verbatim. Hegel admits to Hinrichs, in a letter from April 7, 1821, that he agrees to write the Preface because the course he was about to give that summer would also deal with religion, which is as well the subject of the text on Schlegel in the Lectures. Both Von der Luft and Behler search in vain for the term “Weltweisheit” in Schlegel. Neither of them seems aware of the fact that the term seems to have been commonly used at Jena, around 1800. In fact, Schlegel does use the term in 1798, in an *Athenäum* fragment where he defines Kantian understanding, as opposed to what Schlegel himself takes to be philosophy: “Kant has introduced the concept of the negative into ‘Weltweisheit.’ Would not it be useful to attempt, presently, to introduce into philosophy the concept of the positive?,” *FS*, 2, p. 166. A 3. Whether or not Hegel is actually referring to the above fragment, it is interesting that, in applying it to Schlegel, the reference is also to a “culture of understanding” that is associated with Kantian *Verstand*. An early edition of Schlegel’s *Sämtliche Werke* was published in 1822 (Vienna: Jakob Mayer). However, given the chronology of the Preface, it seems impossible that Hegel is referring to this publication.
- 24 *Werke* 11, p. 61. Von der Luft, pp. 263–4.
- 25 *Phenomenology*, s. 130. *Werke* 3, p. 105.
- 26 Hypocrisy is linked to Schlegel in the Addition to paragraph 140 of the *Philosophy of Right*. Hypocrisy, in Hegel, is a technical concept. It describes the relation between the ironic individual and his world, where one takes one’s own judgments for objective reality. The hypocritical relation is maintained by means of sophistry. I will return to this later.
- 27 *Werke* 11, p. 61.
- 28 *Phenomenology*, s. 131. *Werke* 3, p. 106.
- 29 *Phenomenology*, s. 204. *Werke* 3, p. 160.
- 30 *Werke* 18, p. 423.
- 31 “das Mass aller Dinge.” I believe Hegel’s interpretation of this phrase is echoed in Hannah Arendt’s take on the Greek, *panton chrematon metron estin anthropos*. (Diels, *Fragmente der Versokratiker*, 4th Edition, frag. B1). “The word *chremata* absolutely does not mean ‘everything’ (even less, ‘anything’) but specifically the things used, required and possessed by man.” Hannah Arendt, *The Human*

- Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958) page 158n. 23. Hegel's quote shows that the world of Greek sophistry is precisely that of a multiplicity of *chremata* determined and mastered by particular subjectivity's "will as power."
- 32 *Werke* 17, p. 181.
- 33 Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, *Werke* 17, p. 181.
- 34 One might then say that the hypocritical, modern sophist (Schlegel) is a *poseur*.
- 35 The passage that we are commenting, from the Preface to Hinrichs's work on religion. *Werke* 11, p. 61.
- 36 *Werke* 18, p. 423.
- 37 *Werke* 7, p. 317.
- 38 *Werke* 7, p. 317. Schlegel: "Prudery is the pretense of innocence, without innocence. It is necessary, however, that women remain prudish as long as men remain sentimental, stupid, and bad, demanding of them an eternal innocence and lack of culture. For only innocence can ennoble lack of culture," *FS*, 2, p. 170. A 31.
- 39 Perhaps the most profound effect of Rousseau's *Confessions* on Hegel's time is the now inextricable association between the life of the author and his work. Following the *Confessions*, the life and work of the artist is as one. Hegel was aware of this romantic tendency, as we see in the passage from his *Lectures on Esthetics*, which we will examine in detail further on, where he refers to the romantic artist who, "must live as an artist, give an artistic form to his life," *Werke* 13, p. 94. Hegel even understands Goethe's *Werther* as a symptomatic expression of a sickly stage in the artist's life, from which Goethe escapes by exteriorizing his melancholy in the work itself. This diagnosis is found in Hegel's *Review of Solger's Posthumous Writings and Correspondence*. See my French translation and commentary in *Hegel—L'ironie romantique* (1997) §21. *Werke* 11, p. 231. The autobiographical character of *Lucinde* was generally recognized, from when it was first published (1800), to the extent that Schlegel's future wife Dorothea (represented by the main female character in the novel) found her social situation difficult.
- 40 The "most beautiful situation" in question is the reversing of roles in sexual intercourse, in order to achieve the perfect unity between man and woman, and nature as a whole. "I see here a wonderful, deeply meaningful allegory: masculinity and femininity perfecting one another, attaining full and complete humanity." Peter Firchow, *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, p. 49. For Hegel, this immediate reversal would be monstrous or against nature insofar as, domestically, woman *naturally* represents the moment of the universal and man, the moment of the particular. Their unity is only accomplished in the reconciling, syllogistic outcome: the individual child, an outcome characterized by a spiritual conjugal relation that rises above desire.
- 41 This idea contradicts any opinion maintaining that Hegel would have modified his judgment of Schlegel if the former had only been better acquainted with the latter's subsequent writings, following his Jena romantic period. First, Schlegel's

- conversion to Catholicism, to which Hegel refers disparagingly in his above-quoted correspondence to von Raumer, would hardly have guaranteed a more sympathetic appraisal. Further, the publishing of the ten-volume first edition of Schlegel's works (1822–5), which contained works at least as recent as 1814 (*Lectures on the History of Ancient and Modern Literature*), has no effect on the way Hegel considers Schlegel between the writing of the *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and his review of Solger's works (1828). The ironic individuality that is Schlegel remains that of *Lucinde* and the *Athenäum*. In fact, his conversion to Catholicism only illustrates the vanity of such a personality. In any case, seeing Schlegel himself as a seducer of women is tendentious. He seems to have remained devoted to his lover and then wife, Dorothea, for the rest of his life and was rather progressive regarding women in general. Schlegel: "Women are as unjustly treated in poetry as in life. The feminine is not an ideal and the ideal is not feminine," *FS*, 2, p. 172. A 49. For more on Schlegel and women, see my "Rousseau et la poésie romantique de Friedrich Schlegel: le philosophe dans les fragments de l'*Athenäum*," in Philip Knee (ed.), *Rousseau et le romantisme* (Montmorency: SIAM—JJR, 2012), pp. 75–85. For a comparison between Schlegel's view of erotic love and Hegel's early reflections on the subject, see my, "La jeune fille et la mort: Hegel et le désir érotique," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, 61, 2 (June 2005), pp. 345–53.
- 42 *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, Philosophy of Spirit*, §§427, 428. I will only give the section numbers to references in the *Encyclopedia*, unless more precision is demanded, e.g. in lengthy Additions to the sections.
- 43 *Encyclopedia*, §426 add.
- 44 *Philosophy of Right*, §139 Remark. *Werke* 7, p. 261.
- 45 Schlegel:
- Almost all marriages are concubinages, liaisons or rather provisional trials and distant approximations of a true marriage [...] It's hard to imagine what fundamental objection one could have to a marriage à quatre. But when the state tries to keep even unsuccessful trial marriages together by force, then it impedes the possibility of marriage itself, which might be helped by means of new and possibly more successful experiments. *FS*, 2, p. 170. A 34.
- 46 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, Georg Lasson (ed.), 2nd Edition (Berlin: Meiner, 1922) p. 426.
- 47 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik*.
- 48 "That I may broaden myself to you and you to me; that what isolates us may perish in fire."
- 49 We may contrast this declaration with the "dream" that Julius tells Lucinde, in Schlegel's novel:

All the mysteries of male and female frivolity seemed to hover about me as suddenly your real presence and the gleam of blooming happiness on your face

inflamed my lonely self. Wit and rapture alternated between us and became the common pulse of our united life, and we embraced each another with as much wantonness as religion. I begged you that for once you might give yourself completely over to frenzy, and I implored you to be insatiable.

Firchow (trans.), *Lucinde and the Fragments*, p. 44.

- 50 *Werke* 3, p. 336. Miller §457.
- 51 Hotho incorporates Hegel's course notes from Berlin (1818 and 1829), along with three student notebooks from 1826 and five from 1828–9. For the text on the Romantics, see *Werke* 13, pp. 92–9.
- 52 *Werke* 13, p. 93. Walter Benjamin's thesis, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik der deutschen Romantik*, 1973, places the Fichtean "I" at the root of Schlegel's thought. This idea is taken up by Winfried Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung: die frühromantische Kunsttheorie im Begriff absoluter Selbstreflexion*, 1987. In presenting Hegel's critique of Schlegel, I intend to bring to light the Kantian dimension that underlies any Hegelian reference to Fichte, particularly with regard to the idea of infinite self-reflection.
- 53 *Werke* 13, p. 92.
- 54 *Werke* 13, p. 92.
- 55 *Werke* 13, p. 92.
- 56 *Werke* 13, p. 92. Schlegel: "Since nowadays philosophy criticizes everything that comes before it, a criticism of philosophy would be nothing more than fair retaliation," *FS*, 2, p. 173. A 56.
- 57 *Werke* 13, p. 92.
- 58 *Werke* 13, p. 93.
- 59 See Roger Ayrault, *Genèse du romantisme allemande*, 3, 1969, p. 172, according to whom it is above all the Fichtean terminology that Schlegel borrows for his theory of irony. "However, nothing could be more wrong than to reduce these free, analogical relations to a generalized transposition of Fichtean motifs."
- 60 *Werke* 13, p. 93.
- 61 "Mit der einen Richtung der Ironie."
- 62 *Werke* 13, p. 93.
- 63 In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where Hegel is discussing Kant, §42 add.
- 64 *Werke* 13, p. 93.
- 65 Richard Haym chooses Winckelmann and philological studies as Schlegel's starting point. Haym, p. 178. Ayrault finds other starting points: in a kind of neo-Leibnizian form of philosophy of nature; in Kant, before turning to Fichte as a "Kant to the second power." As well, Ayrault remarks how far removed Schlegel's conception of chemical *Witz* as a "combinatory art" is from Fichte's tendency to stick with "one unique idea" that he constantly builds upon through demonstration. Ayrault, p. 147.

- 66 “Difference Between...” *Werke* 2, p. 76. Hegel’s first attempt to comprehend what was surely, at first, “the strange world of the Ego and the non-Ego” (H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Development*, 1, p. 190) happened in 1795 when Hegel was in a Kantian period, where he wrote his *Life of Jesus*. This first comprehension thus takes place in the context of moral and religious considerations. “Practical reason produces the moral law, which is a fact experienced as the form of the higher desirous faculty. This Kantian formula which he has modified to suit himself, Hegel promptly translates into the Schelling-Fichte terminology as the determination of the finite Ego by the absolute Ego and the consequent overcoming of the non-Ego.” Harris, p. 191.
- 67 *Encyclopedia Logic* §60 add. 2. Cf. the trans. by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991) p. 108.
- 68 *Encyclopedia Philosophy Spirit* [EPS] §426 add.
- 69 *Lectures on Esthetics*. *Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 70 *Werke* 13, pp. 93–4. I choose to translate *Schein* as appearance rather than as the more tendentious “semblance.”
- 71 *Werke* 13, p. 98.
- 72 Suppression = *Aufheben*. *Werke* 20, p. 403.
- 73 See *Werke* 13, p. 93. Schlegel himself refers to ironic “self-destruction” in a context where Hegel might have noticed it. “Is naïve that which is natural, individual or classical—or seems it—up until irony, up until the incessant alternating between self-creation and self-destruction [*Selbstvernichtung*],” *FS*, 2, p. 172. A 51. Schlegel recognizes the difference between self-limitation and self-destruction: “Grasping a sense (of a particular art, of a science, of a man, etc.) implies dividing up spirit; self-limitation [*Selbstbeschränkung*], thus a result of self-creation and self-destruction,” *FS*, 2, p. 149. L 28.
- 74 Again, I choose to follow the French tradition, where *Schein* is generally translated as “*apparence*” and *Erscheinung* as “*phénomène*.” This tradition captures the distinction Hegel generally makes between the commonality of “appearance” and the more technical grasp demanded of “phenomena.” “Apparition” for *Schein* loses this commonality.
- 75 *Werke* 6, p. 24.
- 76 *Werke* 6, p. 21.
- 77 *Werke* 6, p. 19.
- 78 *Werke* 6, p. 124.
- 79 *Werke* 6, p. 19.
- 80 *Werke* 6, p. 19.
- 81 *Werke* 6, p. 19.
- 82 *Encyclopedia Logic*, §131 add. The remark echoes a similar affirmation found in the Sense-Certainty section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (s. 109).

- 83 Cf. the trans. by Bernard Bosanquet, emended by J. Glenn Gray in his edition, *G. W. F. Hegel On Art, Religion and History of Philosophy: Introductory Lectures*, with an Introduction by Tom Rockmore (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997 [1970]), pp. 98–9. Regarding the “third place” at the beginning of the text, a footnote reads: “The three points are: (1) The I is abstract. (2) Everything is a semblance [*Schein*] for it. (3) Its own acts, even, are a semblance.”
- 84 *Phenomenology of Spirit. Werke* 3, p. 339.
- 85 *Philosophy of Right. Werke* 7, p. 290.
- 86 “[Ironical subjectivity] consists doubtlessly in knowing what makes up ethical objectivity but not in immersing oneself in its seriousness, in acting in accordance with it, in forgetting oneself and renouncing oneself.” *Philosophy of Right*, §140 Remark. *Werke* 7, p. 187.
- 87 *Aesthetics. Werke* 13, p. 94. Schlegel: “The world is much too serious; seriousness is nonetheless very rare. Seriousness has a specific goal, the most important of all; it can neither chit chat nor fool itself; it pursues constantly its objective until it achieves it,” *FS*, 2, p. 245, A 419.
- 88 *Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 89 *Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 90 See above, note 66.
- 91 On the romantic circle: “It is not just a circle of friends (there are women, amorous or erotic relations, a daring sense of moral ‘experimentation’ that will allow the imagining of, for example, a ‘mariage à quatre’).” Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’absolu littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978) p. 16. My translation.
- 92 Schlegel, “Man soll nicht mit allen symphilosophieren wollen, sondern nur mit denen die à la hauteur sind,” *FS*, 2, p. 210. A 264.
- 93 Pöggeler suggests Hegel first read Schleiermacher’s *Speeches* at Frankfurt, and that his fragments from that time contain allusions to Schleiermacher’s work. Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 229. Roger Ayrault suggests that Schlegel’s first reaction to the term “virtuoso” was not entirely favorable, since he associated it with the author Ludwig Tieck of whose literary virtuosity he was jealous (Cf. *FS*, 2, p. 244, note to A 418). Ayrault points out how Schleiermacher, in his *Speeches*, distinguishes between “virtuosi” as synonymous with “preachers recognized by the state and the people,” which he treats sarcastically, and true virtuosity to which anyone must aspire in his moral, philosophical or artistic actions. Again according to Ayrault, Schleiermacher replaces the term “virtuoso” with that of “mediator” after coming into contact with Novalis. Ayrault 3, p. 381. The quote from Schleiermacher: *Über de Religion* (Philosophische Bibliothek, 255, 1958), p. 3. In another fragment, Schlegel refers to virtuosity in a religious context similar to its usage in Schleiermacher, whose *Speeches* he greatly admired: “Virtuosi who work in similar ways are often those who understand each other the least [...] Religion is quite simply as great as nature, the most imminent preacher can never claim more than a parcel of it,” *FS*, 2, p. 221. A 327.

- 94 *Werke* 13, p. 95.
- 95 *Werke* 13, p. 95. Schlegel: "Genius is not at all a matter of whim [*Willkür*] but rather of freedom, as with wit, love and faith, which must one day become arts and sciences. We must demand genius of everyone, without expecting it. A Kantian would call this the categorical imperative of genius," *FS*, 2, p. 148. L 16. Or: "Understanding is mechanical, wit is chemical and genius is organic spirit," *FS*, 2, p. 232. A 366.
- 96 *Lectures on Esthetics. Werke* 13, pp. 46–7.
- 97 *Lectures on Esthetics. Werke* 13, pp. 46–7.
- 98 *Lectures on Esthetics. Werke* 13, pp. 46–7.
- 99 Letter to von Raumer (*Briefe*, Letter 278). Also in *Werke* 4, p. 420.
- 100 Cf. Bernard Bourgeois's "La pédagogie de Hegel," in his *Hegel, Textes pédagogiques* (Paris: Vrin, 1990) p. 61.
- 101 The 17-year-old Hegel was already aware of the formative power of habit. As H.S. Harris points out, Hegel, in his diary, "inserted his weekly timetable of school-work in the margin of the first entry, and contented himself with the word 'gewöhnlich' as a sort of shorthand for it thereafter." *Hegel's Development*, 1, p. 13.
- 102 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §435 add.
- 103 *Philosophy of Right*, §140. Although this community of beautiful souls may apply to the Jena circle, the original reference could easily apply to the sentimentalist trend in Germany, 30-odd years beforehand:

The Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt [J.H. Merck] had no cultural interests but his wife [...] patronized a little circle of "beaux esprits", among them Merck, Herder's fiancée Caroline Flachsland, her sister and her brother-in-law, and the Crown Prince's tutor F.M. Leuchsenring. Leuchsenring saw himself as the apostle of sentiment, teaching the world, or select souls in it, to weep, and carrying on extensive correspondence in which his adepts shared with one another accounts of poems and journeys, meetings and partings, and the tremulous motions of their hearts—among them we find Wieland, in Erfurt and Weimar.

Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe. The Poet and the Age*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 126.

- 104 *Esthetics. Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 105 *Phenomenology*, s. 637. *Werke* 3, p. 468.
- 106 *Esthetics. Werke* 13, p. 45. In fact, Schlegel writes, "The virtuoso, the man of genius wants to accomplish a certain purpose, create a work of art, etc.," *FS*, 2, p. 234. A 375.
- 107 *Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 108 *Werke* 13, p. 94. Emphasis added.

109 *Werke* 15, p. 495. About Schlegel's play *Alarcos*, Hegel writes:

in French drama, it is also a matter of desiccated honor, completely abstract in itself, that forms the essential motive and interest of the action. But it is above all *Alarcos* by Mr. F. von Schlegel that incarnates such ice-cold and lifeless honor; the hero kills his noble loving wife. Why? For honor, and this honor consists in his wanting to marry the king's daughter, for whom he feels no passion at all, in order to become the king's son-in-law. Odious pathos and detestable idea, with pretensions of grandeur and infinity. *Werke* 14, p. 180.

*Alarcos* was produced for the first time in Weimar, in 1802. Concerning tragedy in Schlegel, Roger Ayrault writes, "with an absence in Friedrich Schlegel himself—the absence of a sense of the tragic [...], when he undertook to leave behind criticism for artistic creation, destined him to the disaster of *Alarcos*," Ayrault, 3, p. 154. According to Otto Pöggeler, Hegel's synopsis of the drama clearly shows how little he knew of it. *Hegel in Berlin*, 1981, p. 115.

110 *Werke* 15, p. 495. Schlegel expresses the dilemma differently: "Any author deserving of the name writes either for no one or for everyone. He who writes in order to be read by either these particular ones or those particular ones deserves not to be read at all," *FS*, 2, p. 157. L 85.

111 *Werke* 15, p. 495.

112 *Werke* 15, p. 495.

113 *Werke* 15, p. 495.

114 *Werke* 15, p. 495.

115 *Werke* 15, p. 495.

116 Schlegel, "Many are those who speak of the public as if it were someone with whom they had lunched at the Hotel de Saxe during the Leipzig Fair. Who is this public? The public is not a thing but a thought, a postulate, like the Church," *FS*, 2, p. 150. L 35.

117 *Werke* 15, p. 497.

118 H.S. Harris notes Hegel's study of Herder in the former's sketch, *Jedes Volk hat ihm eigene Gegenstände* (1796?). *Hegel's Development*, 1, p. 254.

119 *Werke* 15, p. 497

120 In Hegel's correspondence, in a letter to Schelling from November 16, 1803, we read, "[Goethe] (after Friedrich [Schlegel] mistreated [Schiller's] *Horen*, in the journal *Deutschland*) swore, during a meal at Loder's, that these people would never be welcomed in Jena." In his review of Schiller's *Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1796*, regarding "The Dignity of Women", Schlegel writes, "This description of masculinity and femininity, very erudite and poetical in the details, turns out to be, on the whole, monotonous," *FS*, 2, p. 6.



- 121 H.S. Harris notes the influence on Hegel, of Schiller's *Letters* as support for the thesis that he was the author of the "Earliest System-programme of German Idealism," *Hegel's Development*, 1, p. 253.
- 122 *Werke* 13, p. 89.
- 123 Reference to *Critique of Pure Reason*, Second Edition, §6. (French, p. 91?).
- 124 *Science of Logic. Werke* 6, p. 573. For a survey of this much-debated expression, see the chapter, "The Fiery Crucible, Yorick's Skull and Leprosy in the Sky: Hegel and the Language of Nature" in my book *Real Words: Language and System in Hegel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) pp. 40–54.
- 125 Normally "sich erfüllen" would be translated as "to fulfill oneself." By writing "fulfill" I want to stress the formal dimension of fulfillment, where subjective form anticipates the pleasure of actual filling. See *Lectures on Esthetics, Werke* 13, p. 95, in the passage where Hegel discusses the divine genius of the ironic artist.
- 126 "in der Seligkeit des Selbstgenusses" *Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 127 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Nature*, §359.
- 128 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Nature*, §365. Emphasis is mine.
- 129 *Lectures on Esthetics. Werke* 13, p. 94. Emphasis is mine. In Schlegel, we also find the image of animal digestion, applied to the critic. "A critic is a reader who ruminates. He therefore needs more than one stomach," *FS*, 2, p. 149. L 27.
- 130 *Werke* 3, p. 151. We are dealing with the master's enjoyment of things, in his relation with the slave, which is fitting to the *Meisterschaft* with which Hegel qualifies Schlegel.
- 131 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §577.
- 132 Recall that in the ironic subject, "Das Ich nun drittens ist lebendige, tätiges Individuum [...]," *Lectures on Esthetics. Werke* 13, p. 94.
- 133 *Phenomenology. Werke* 3, p. 271. The quote is from the "Pleasure and Necessity" chapter, dealing with the satisfactions of the fully developed, living, individual, post-Enlightenment self-consciousness.
- 134 "Sich genießt," which could be translated as "takes pleasure in itself." *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §577. The same self-enjoyment of Spirit can be found in the image of the foaming chalice, borrowed from Schiller, that closes the *Phenomenology*.
- 135 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Nature*, §364.
- 136 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §552.
- 137 *Werke* 2, p. 552. Referred to as his "Wastebok" fragments.
- 138 *Lectures on Esthetics, Werke* 13, p. 96.
- 139 For a French translation of Hegel's review, with a Forward on Solger and his metaphysical irony, see my *Hegel: L'ironie romantique* (Paris: Vrin, 1997). The passage on Schlegel is in paragraphs 22 and 23. *Werke* 11, pp. 232–3. An English translation of Hegel's review of Solger's works, by Diana Behler, can be found in Ernst Behler (ed.) *Hegel's Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings* (New York: Continuum, 1990 [The German Library; no. 24]), pp. 265–319).

- 140 Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 192. Pöggeler relates how Schlegel's 1822 essay in the *Wiener Jahrbüchern der Literatur* condemns Hegel for "aping" Fichte. In Schlegel's later *Philosophie des Lebens* (1828), he likens Hegel to the "Antichristian" poet Byron!
- 141 *Werke* 11, p. 233.
- 142 *Werke* 11, p. 233.
- 143 *Werke* 11, p. 233.
- 144 *Werke* 2, p. 560 "Rezensenten" might also be translated as "reviewers" rather than "critics." In any case, one might find ironical that later in life (1828) Hegel would himself become the "reviewer/critic" of such works as Solger's. That the latter's reviewed works were posthumous might add another element to any consideration of Hegel's review technique, where he tends to infiltrate the discourse in question, making it hard to distinguish his own voice from his subject's, and then bring to light "from inside" any contradictions or limitations found there. The morbid aspect of critical analysis is a general theme of late *Aufklärung* thought. In Schlegel, "When young people of both sexes know how to dance to a lively tune, it doesn't occur to them, for all that, to want to critically judge the music itself. Why do people have less respect for poetry?," *FS*, 2, p. 167. A 13. In other words, "Only by poetry can poetry be criticized." *FS*, 2, p. 162. L 117.
- 145 Hegel is influenced by Hölderlin's short text "Urtheil und Seyn" where we find the term divided: "ur-theilen". Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* t.4, F. Beissner (ed.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962) pp. 226–7. See "The Ontological Grasp of Judgment" in my book *Real Words*, pp. 18–28.
- 146 *Science of Logic*, Doctrine of the Concept. *Werke* 6, p. 301.
- 147 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §467 add.
- 148 Schlegel: "As long as philosophers do not become grammarians, or grammarians philosophers, grammar will neither be what it was for the Ancients, a pragmatic science and part of logic, nor, in general, a science," *FS*, 2, p. 179. A 92.
- 149 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §467.
- 150 *Science of Logic*, Doctrine of the Concept. *Werke* 6, p. 303.
- 151 *Science of Logic*, Doctrine of the Concept. *Werke* 6, pp. 303–4.
- 152 *Werke* 11, p. 233. In other words, for subjective idealism.
- 153 *Werke* 11, p. 233.
- 154 *Werke* 11, p. 233. It is this *Eitelkeit* that distinguishes Schlegel's judgments from those of Solger or Tieck, and *Vereitelung* is specific to that form of irony Schlegel has inspired.
- 155 Preface to Hinrichs's *Philosophy of Religion*, where Hegel again attributes such "worldly wisdom" to Schlegel. *Werke* 11, p. 61. See above, the discussion of *Sophisterei*, worldly wisdom and Schlegel.
- 156 Even though we might find distasteful the organic signification of the term "evacuation," this meaning is not entirely foreign to Hegel's take on romantic

irony, by the “judging manner” that he so closely associates with it. On the formal judgments of the understanding, Hegel writes:

One claims that we judge thus: ‘Gold is yellow.’ A likely claim. But it is not equally likely that we reason thus: ‘Caius is a man; therefore he is mortal.’ For me at least, I have never thought of anything so dull. It must be produced somewhere in our gut without us being conscious of it. Of course many things are produced in our gut, for example the production of urine or worse yet, but when that is expelled we plug our noses. The same for such a reasoning.

Wastebook Fragments (#8). *Werke* 2, p. 541

- 157 In my French translation of Hegel’s *Review* of Solger’s work, I introduce the neologism “vanitization” for *Vereitelung*. Irony is thus the “self-conscious vanitization of what is objective.” *Werke* 11, p. 233.

## Intermezzo 1

- 1 See Adriaan Peperzak’s insightful article “Second Nature: Place and Significance of Objective Spirit in Hegel’s Encyclopedia,” *Owl of Minerva*, 27, 1 (Fall 1995): pp. 51–66.
- 2 This is particularly true with the overviews of Hegel’s philosophy. Two examples: Charles Taylor’s book on Hegel contains only ten pages on the philosophy of nature; none of the 14 contributions making up *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) deals directly with the philosophy of nature. Recent interest in the Philosophy of Nature includes work by Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel’s Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Stephen Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Emmanuel Renault, *Hegel et la naturalisation de la dialectique* (Paris: Vrin, 2001). In “The Fiery Crucible, Yorick’s Skull and Leprosy in the Sky: Hegel and the Otherness of Nature,” in my *Real Words*, I present a spectrum of approaches to the “otherness of nature” question, running from what I call the processional view (Engels, Stone, Houlgate), where logic is embedded in nature, to William Maker, who acknowledges the absolute otherness of nature in order to guarantee the freedom of thought. My own view, as expressed here, is close to Maker’s, regarding the otherness of nature, although, for me, this necessary otherness is re-appropriated through the linguistic reality of scientific *logos*. Cf. William Maker, “The Very Idea of the Idea of Nature,” in Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*.

- 3 This is precisely Engels's misconception, as can be found in his essay *Ludwig Feuerbach*. "[Dialectical philosophy] reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away; of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain" (New York: International Publishers, 1941) p. 12. For a succinct contemporary expression of this misconception, see Alison Stone's "Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Overcoming the Division between Matter and Thought," *Dialogue*, 39, 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 725–43. The author claims to discover a "theory" of nature, "according to which nature progresses in a rationally necessary series of stages from an initial division between its two constituent elements, thought and matter, to their eventual unification." The author proceeds to show this progression through "an extended comparison between the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit" (pp. 725–6). I am arguing that if objectivity, whether natural or human, moves according to such a progression, it is *because it has been invested with thought* and thought is dialectical, i.e. it moves from original unity, through separation (*Urteilen*), to reconciliation. In Hegel, pure, undigested, pre-negated nature does not move on its own accord. Indeed, it is unmoving, lifeless, and dead.
- 4 For example, in *Faith and Knowing*, Hegel credits the *influence* of Locke and Hume with having "dragged down" the subjective idealism of Kant, Jacobi, Fichte into the realm of "finitude and subjectivity." *Werke* 2, pp. 376–377.
- 5 See note 163.
- 6 Daniel Cook, in reviewing David Lamb's book *Language and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein*, agrees that both Hegel and Wittgenstein argue against the empirical account of the relationship between language and reality, and the resultant "atomic facts." However, both commentators share the belief that we can still "make sense of our sense experience" through "certain contextual relations." "Review of *Language and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein*," David Lamb (New York: St. Martins Press) 1979, *Owl of Minerva* 14, 2 (December 1982) pp. 2–3. In her article "Can Hegel Refer to Particulars," *Owl of Minerva*, 17, 2 (Spring 1986) pp. 181–194, Katherina Dulckeit also sees sense certainty in the *Phenomenology* as a thesis about linguistic reference. By proving that Hegelian discourse can refer to particulars, the author apparently seeks to show that, for Hegel, scientific knowledge is empirically grounded.
- 7 Investigations such as Katherina Dulckeit's article "Can Hegel Refer to Particulars?" fail to grasp the distinction I am making between referential, reflective language and the language of Science, just as these investigations fail to distinguish between indiscriminate objectivity (K. Dulckeit is referring to the miscellaneous objects of sense certainty in the *Phenomenology*) and the objects of scientific discourse.

- 8 Frank Schalow, in his article “The Question of Being and the Recovery of Language Within Hegelian Thought,” *Owl of Minerva*, 24, 2 (Spring 1993) pp. 163–180, writes: “In an amorphous way, Hegel [like Kant] formulated the problem of the relation between being and thought, but not so decisively as to view language as having an even greater importance in forming an essential link between the two” (p. 164). I am arguing that the language of Science is precisely that: the essential embodiment of being and thought. For Schalow, language can only reflect or “make visible” the mediation between thought and being. The relation between objective truth and language thus remains referential and ultimately, according to Hegel, subjective. “Through its own activity, language makes visible the mediation of opposites, and thereby exemplifies the form of determinateness essential to thought” (p. 165). In other words, scientific language remains merely analogous to truth itself (the union of thought and being). In fact, as early as 1802, in *Faith and Knowing*, Hegel defines the discourse of Reason as that in which subject and predicate express the identity of thought and being. *Werke* 2, p. 304.
- 9 Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* §464. *Werke* 10, p. 282.
- 10 John McCumber’s insightful and detailed analysis of this section of the *Encyclopedia* (§§ 451–464) explores Hegel’s use of the “name” as a linguistic “sign” and reveals its entirely natural and singular objectivity. *The Company of Words, Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), pp. 220–238.
- 11 “[N]ames as such [are] *external, senseless entities*, which only have significance as *signs*.” *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §459. *Werke* 10, p. 274. In this paragraph, Hegel argues against the Herderian notion of words, as natural objects, having some inherent sense, i.e. that they naturally imitate certain sounds. For Hegel, purely natural entities have no inherent sense. Even though they may be formed by the interplay of natural causes and effects, they remain, in themselves, arbitrary. They are meaningless “names” or empty signs waiting to be signified by intelligence. This also explains Hegel’s argument against phrenology, in the *Phenomenology*. Skulls, as purely natural entities, do not express some inherent meaning which need only be deciphered. See my “Fiery Crucible,” cited in note 159.
- 12 McCumber, p. 233.
- 13 McCumber uses the term “sign” as something signifying. I am using it as a synonym for “name,” a mere, empty token waiting to be invested with meaning (*Gehalt*). As such, it is still insignificant.
- 14 The 1817 version of this paragraph included the sentence, “Names, there are many of them, and, as such, they are contingent names with regard to one another.” The contingency of the actual sign, divorced from any signification, simply means that “lion,” for example, could well have evolved to be written and pronounced otherwise, as “leo” for example, just as I personally might have been *named* “Gregory” instead of “Jeffrey,” which could also have been spelled “Geoffrey.”

- 15 "Sense-certainty, then, though indeed expelled from the object, is not yet thereby overcome, but only driven back into the 'I.'" *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Miller (Oxford: University Press, 1977) s.100; *Werke* 3, p. 86.
- 16 This, then, is why the thing (*Sache*) appears in the "Doctrine of Essence," under the heading "The Thing's Emergence into Existence," and why James Wilkinson's proposed translation of *die Sache* as "engendering," though somewhat awkward, does make sense. "On Translating *Sache* in Hegel's Texts: A Response," *Owl of Minerva*, 27, 2 (Spring 1996) pp. 211–30.
- 17 For Hegel, there is no (universal) philosophical science without the particular sciences as content. Thus, in his letter/report to von Raumer, on education, he complains that "the materials of the particular sciences have not yet attained their reorganization and adoption into the new idea" (*Werke* 4, p. 419). Hegel sees the particular, positive sciences as a (written) canon of work, to be first learned and assimilated, and then reconsidered conceptually. "This content of understanding, this systematic mass of abstract concepts [i.e. predicative statements] rich in significance [*gehaltvoller Begriffe*] are immediately the stuff of Philosophy [...]." Report to Niethammer on education, *Werke* 4, p. 414. This content, reworked dialectically, is how Hegel defines science: "The content grasped conceptually [*Das Begriffene*] is alone what is philosophical [as it is present] in the form of the Concept." (*Werke* 4, p. 415) The scientific whole is "only grasped through the elaboration of the parts [...]." Letter/report to von Raumer, *Werke* 4, p. 420.
- 18 More importantly, the concept of the content-rich, scientific word enables us to understand how (for Hegel), formally common language, with its (almost) everyday vocabulary and predication-based grammar can ultimately attain an expression of *logos* in its deepest, richest meanings: as the word of science, as reason and reality, and as the Word of God. It can do so because it is capable of embodying thought and being, and thereby embracing true, objective content and becoming, itself, true objectivity.
- 19 *Encyclopedia* §491. *Werke* 10, p. 307.
- 20 *Phenomenology*, trans. Miller, §61–6. *Werke* 3, pp. 59–62.
- 21 Jere Paul Surber, "Hegel's Speculative Sentence," *Hegel Studien*, 10, (1975), p. 222.
- 22 McCumber p. 260. Also, Daniel Cook's review of David Lamb's *Language and Perception in Hegel and Wittgenstein*, p. 2. Both Cook and Lamb share, to some extent, the Wittgenstein idea of contextuality.
- 23 For Hegel, philosophical discourse is university discourse, and not destined for public consumption. See his critique of Solger in this regard. *Werke* 11, pp. 266–71. See Chapter 8, "Hegel's Critique of Solger: The Problem of Scientific Communication," in my *Real Words*, pp. 96–103.
- 24 "Doctrine of the Concept," Section I, chapters 2, 3.

- 25 Discussion of the copula arises in a Kantian context (i.e. in *Faith and Knowing*) and can be seen as a reaction to Kant's belittling of the copula in his dismissal of the ontological argument, in the first *Critique*. The copula is again discussed in the section on judgment in the *Systementwürfe* (1804/5), *Gesammelte Werke* 7, ed. R.P. Horstmann and J.H. Trede (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968) pp. 80–93. Hegel's discussions of the copula can only be understood with reference to Fichte's "I am I," to Hölderlin's thoughts on judgment (*Sämtliche Werke* iv, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962) pp. 226–7, and to Schelling's philosophy of identity. Perhaps, Hegel's earliest thoughts on the speculative nature of judgment and the copula are found in the Frankfurt fragment "*Glauben ist die Art...*" *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. Nohl, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907) pp. 382–385.
- 26 See *Wissenschaft der Logik, Das Sein*, ed. Gawoll (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986) p. 54. "The proposition (*Satz*) is in no way immediately suited to express speculative truths."
- 27 *Science of Logic, Doctrine of the Concept. Werke* 6, p. 304. This understanding of judgment as an "original dividing" is explicitly stated and referred to as an "Ur-Teilung" in Hölderlin's short text "Urteil und Sein." *Sämtliche Werke*, op.cit., pp. 226–7. See Chapter 2, "The Ontological Grasp of Judgment" in my *Real Words*, pp. 18–28.
- 28 Surber points out how Hegel asks us to accept "subject" in both its grammatical sense and as individual consciousness. Surber pp. 214–15. Again, I refer to the Hölderlin text cited above, apparently written in the Frankfurt period, when he and Hegel were reunited. Here, Hölderlin describes judgment as the original separation that makes "subject and object possible," thus conflating the grammatical and "consciousness" senses of the subject. As we saw in the chapter on Schlegel, judgment or predication becomes associated with the pronouncements of individual (ironic) subjectivity in its position against scientific objectivity, thus referring judgment to Fichte's "I am I," as indeed Hölderlin does.
- 29 *Science of Logic, Werke* 6, p. 302.
- 30 *Science of Logic, Werke* 6, p. 309.
- 31 *Science of Logic, Werke* 6, p. 310.
- 32 Hegel, *Encyclopedia* §464. *Werke* 10, p. 282.
- 33 *Werke* 6, p. 354.
- 34 This is why the thing (*Sache*) appears, in the *Logic's Doctrine of Essence*, under the title, "The thing's emergence into existence." *Die Sache* should be understood as the objective manifestation of essence. I am arguing for its linguistic nature in Hegel, i.e. its status as *logos*, both in the Greek sense of a reasoned discourse and in the Christian sense of God's revelation.
- 35 *Encyclopedia* §493. *Werke* 10, p. 308.

- 36 *Encyclopedia* §494
- 37 *Logic, Doctrine of Essence. Werke* 6, p. 13.
- 38 *Phenomenology. Werke* 3, p. 169.
- 39 *Encyclopedia* §489. *Werke* 10, p. 307.
- 40 *Encyclopedia* §494. *Werke* 10, p. 308.
- 41 I will deal with this crucial “performative” or actual aspect of scientific language below. For now, it is important to understand that ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) can only constitute an object (i.e. a content) for science in terms of what I have been describing as content-ful language. Discussions on Habermasian language-based ethics and their opposition to Hegelian intersubjectivity should be reexamined in this light. Obviously, my account of Hegel’s scientific language implies this opposition is largely unfounded, since it seems based on “Habermas’s attention to the linguistic dimension of [...] autonomy, and Hegel’s neglect of that dimension,” as Pippin summarizes the problem in *Idealism as Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 180. Once again, the linguistic dimension I am referring to pertains to the objects (contents) of Science. This, most emphatically, does not mean conversation or the exchange of personal opinions. In terms of intersubjectivity, we might refer to mutual recognition through mutually recognized text.
- 42 Shlomo Avineri points out how the expression “what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational” (which is another way of expressing the conjunction of thought and being) first appears in Hegel’s Heidelberg lectures (1817–8) in the context of the (written) constitution. Avineri quotes Hegel: “What is rational must happen (*muss geschehen*) since the constitution is after all its development.” *Owl of Minerva*, 16, 2 (Spring 1985), p. 203.
- 43 As Hegel maintains in §549 of the *Encyclopedia*, history is essentially historiography, the objective, yet still formal expressions of which are: (1) original and (2) reflective. History itself becomes *rational* (i.e. dialectical) only in that it is then understood and expressed speculatively in the philosophy of history. This view is obviously at odds with the interpretation of Hegelian objectivity that holds history (i.e. historical events) to be, in itself, dialectical. Marx understood this difference better than many have done since.
- 44 This reflects a deeply personal penchant of Hegel’s, who was, by all accounts, a voracious and methodical reader from his very youth. Hegel’s predilection for nature in its digested, determined form is also reflected in his account of his youthful trip to the Alps, where his primary interest seems to have been in finding locations whose descriptions he had previously read.
- 45 See for example John Burbidge, “Hegel on Galvanism,” in Ardis B. Collins (ed.) *Hegel on the Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) pp. 111–24. The article shows how Hegel relies on the writings of his time, in order to



- develop the theory of galvanism that we find in §330 of the *Encyclopedia*. Burbidge also shows how Hegel, in choosing his scientific content prefers those where the form of speculative thought is best seen.
- 46 The word has a particularly elevated status in Hegel's aesthetics. "The object corresponding to [poetry] is the infinite sphere of spirit"; thus, the word is "that most constructive material [*bildsamste Material*], which immediately hears spirit and is most capable of grasping its interests and movements into its inner liveliness," *Lectures on Esthetics*, *Werke* 15, p. 239.
- 47 "[T]he true content of religion is first present to the mind in words and letters ... in words and writings." Preface to Hinrichs, *Philosophy of Religion*, *Werke* 11, p. 44. Hegel's position is radically opposed to Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, for whom "all sacred writing is a mausoleum for religion." First edition of *Discourses on Religion*, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* I.2, ed. Peiter, Birkner et al. (New York, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980) p. 242.
- 48 Hegel's 1802 polemical essay against the philosopher Krug, who had asked speculative philosophers to deduce his pen, is meant to show that philosophy does not deal with individual, "natural" objects.
- 49 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Right* §330.
- 50 See Chapter 5, "Presenting the Past: Hegel's Epistemological Historiography," in my *Real Words*, pp. 58–70.
- 51 *Werke* 11, p. 265.
- 52 *Werke* 11, p. 233.
- 53 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, §467 add. *Werke* 10, p. 286.
- 54 *Werke* 11, p. 233.

## Chapter 2

- 1 The most heroic effort in the first vein is Thomas Haering's *Novalis als Philosoph*, 1954, which attempts to exhaustively systematize Novalis's thought in order to find a number of parallels with Hegel. Not only does this method seem to involve errors of detail (e.g. the dialectical unity between poetry and philosophy that Haering finds in both thinkers—see Pöggeler, p. 363. See also Pierre Garniron, Hegel, *Histoire de la philosophie*, t.7, p. 2168 n.), but, in general, one might wonder whether the fact of systematizing a thinker as fragmentary as Novalis (not only in his use of the literary fragment but in the very multiplicity of other genres he employed) is not to do violence to the thought itself, to such an extent that any subsequent comparison with a truly systematic philosopher, like Hegel, becomes falsified. Emanuel Hirsch's point of view is based on an equally dubious, inverted procedure: seeing Hegel's thought as a series of intuitions inspired by Novalis,

whose fragments would have acted as “illuminating sparks” in Hegel’s mind (Hirsch, p. 527). Perhaps the only way to consider such diverse thinkers together is under the historical banner of what Pöggeler calls the *Goethezeit*. As I remarked in the Introduction, if we define this period according to a set of common demands, for example the unification of the finite and the infinite, the conditioned and the unconditioned, and we consider that the thinkers of this time held, in common, a certain stock of technical terms/concepts, then any attempt to establish influences and similarities becomes possible to the extent that the terms themselves become vague. Regarding the beautiful soul, I have already mentioned the difficulty in attributing such references to figures in the *Phenomenology*. E. Hirsch’s frustration in finding a suitable reference for the beautiful soul is typical: “Whoever chooses not to accept [my] explication, I beg him to find a better one.” Besides a reference to Novalis, Hirsch finds in the beautiful soul references to Jacobi’s novel *Woldemar* as well as to Hölderlin. Hirsch, p. 524.

- 2 Pöggeler, p. 362.
- 3 Hegel does not use Novalis’s real name: G. P. von Hardenberg. See note 20 below.
- 4 *Werke* 13, p. 202.
- 5 *Werke* 13, p. 209.
- 6 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 7 The text reads, “schlechten Subjekten.” The “subjects” are the content (*Inhalt*) of modern ironic works. Nonetheless, as we saw with Schlegel, these “poor” contents are nothing but the vanity of the ironic subject expressed artistically. We may perhaps take Hegel’s use of “poor subjects” as a play of words. The idea of consumption that I explored in the first chapter, with reference to the subjective content of the ironic individual is clearly seen in Hegel’s use of the expression “sich delektieren,” which I have translated here as “self-gratification.”
- 8 *Werke* 13, p. 211. I translate *Gemüt* as “inner soul” to distinguish it from *Seele*. Hegel associates both “Seele” and “Gemüt” (both of which can be translated as “soul”) with Novalis. Perhaps the best way to distinguish them is by context. “Gemüt” is usually encountered in an esthetic context, and “Seele” in reference to anthropological considerations. The former is more of an expression of active creativity, the latter, a natural determining substance. In Hegel’s presentation of Novalis, we will see how “Gemüt” can represent a pathological state of the “Seele” (the natural soul) in its relation to the understanding.
- 9 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 10 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 11 *Werke* 13, p. 211. “allseitige Vernichtungskunst.”
- 12 In the text, the two expressions of irony are distinguished as “diese allseitige Vernichtungskunst” and “jene Sehnsüchtigkeit.”
- 13 *Werke* 13, p. 211.

- 14 *Werke* 13, p. 207.
- 15 *Werke* 13, p. 207.
- 16 *Werke* 13, p. 207.
- 17 “Willens als Macht,” expression that Hegel applies to Schlegel in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. *Werke* 17, p. 181.
- 18 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 19 Novalis indeed died of consumption (*Schwindsucht*, known today as tuberculosis) in 1801, at the age of 29.
- 20 Novalis was born Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, on May 2, 1772, a direct descendent of a line of Saxon nobility traceable to the twelfth century. Some of his ancestors had derived a Latin name from the name of one of their domains, *Grossenrode* (great clearing) to produce “de Novali” (of the clearing). Novalis took up this name as his nom de plume. Hegel’s attitude toward Novalis may also have been tempered by the power enjoyed by the Hardenberg family, particularly in Prince Karl August von Hardenberg (a cousin of Novalis’s father), Minister and Chancellor of the Prussian State. In a letter from October 1820, Hegel offers Hardenberg a copy of the *Philosophy of Right* for his library, thanking him for his generous patronage of “all scientific work.” *Briefe* 2, Letter 376.
- 21 Harris, *Hegel’s Development*, 1, pp. 471–2.
- 22 Quoted by Harris, *Hegel’s Development*, Cf. Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, 1913, pp. 122–3.
- 23 Harris sees in this Hegelian nostalgia for nobility “the essentially Platonic origin of his inspiration.” Op. cit. p. 357. The same origin perhaps explains his patrician disdain, in the pre-Phenomenological writings, for the bourgeois appetites. The notion that Novalis has of the sovereign prince is not far removed, in terms of the ideality of the position, from the early Hegelian position. Novalis: “The king is neither a citizen nor a civil servant. The monarch’s distinction is due to the fact that it presupposes a belief in a man of higher birth, the free acceptance of an ideal man.” “Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin,” fragment 18, *Schriften*, 2, p. 489.
- 24 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, 1922 edition, p. 472.
- 25 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 472.
- 26 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 472.
- 27 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 489.
- 28 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 472.
- 29 Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 472.
- 30 *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, Philosophy of Spirit* §546.
- 31 This personality trait is difficult to reconcile with Novalis’s professional, nonliterary life. His father found him an administrative position in the Saxony salt mines,

where he seems to have distinguished himself, being promoted to the level of *Supernumeraramtshauptmann*, in 1800. However, Hegel judges Novalis from the point of view of his literary production, such as the *Hymns to the Night* and the uncompleted novel, *Henry of Ofterdingen*, in which the mine is used as a metaphor for an imaginative inner life.

- 32 The German reads: "wie Novalis z.B., eines der edleren Gemüter." *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 33 *Werke* 3, p. 160. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller, s. 204, slightly altered.
- 34 *Werke* 3, p. 169.
- 35 *Werke* 3, p. 169.
- 36 *Werke* 3, p. 170 (my emphasis).
- 37 *Werke* 3, p. 169.
- 38 That is, in the sensuous enjoyment of the host, in self-mortification, in ascetic sacrifice, instances where we find too much attention given to "animal functions," along with the promotion of the individual will. *Werke* 3, pp. 174, 177.
- 39 Here, Hegel calls such ascetic sacrifice a "pitiful action [*ärmliches Tun*]." *Werke* 3, pp. 174, 177.
- 40 In linking Novalis to the *Gemüt* and thus to the interiority of the soul, Hegel is only recognizing one dimension of the spirit that Novalis presents in his writings: "What a narrow aspect has been found in physics for the *Gemüt* (for the depth of intimate being), and how we have as yet so little employed it for the external world!" *Novalis Schriften* vol. 3, fragment 138, p. 574. "The first stage is a looking inwards, a contemplation of our self, where it distinguishes itself. Whoever stops there stops halfway. The second stage must be an effective look outwards, a spontaneous and strong observation of the external world." *Schriften*, vol. 2 (*Blütenstaub*), fragment 24, p. 423. Nonetheless, the subjectivity of perception does not remain bound to the categories that the understanding projects onto objectivity, for these are joined by the "category" of the *Gemüt*, which has the power to make the world magical, to make it a mediator between the human and the divine, and thus to transform the perception that we have of the world. This representative power is that of the poetic word. As Karl Heinz Volkmann-Schluck explains, the representational power of the soul in Novalis's magical idealism goes beyond a mere subjective coloring of the world, but rather involves the transformation of objectivity into subjectivity. Volkmann-Schluck suggests a translation of *Gemüt* in terms of the Latin words "animus" or "mens." "Novalis' magischer Idealismus," in *Die deutsche Romantik*, 1967, p. 50.
- 41 In his *Lectures on Esthetics*, after having linked the first form of irony to Schlegel, Hegel refers to "the next form of this negativity of irony," which is characterized by the sickly beautiful soul and yearning [*die krankhafte Schönseelischkeit und Sehnsüchtigkeit*], i.e. Novalis. *Werke* 13, p. 96.

- 42 Hegel takes seriously the romantic tenet that the life of the artist should itself be conceived artistically. See *Werke* 13, pp. 94–5. Again, Novalis is judged according to his artistic production, which expresses, for Hegel, his truth, rather than according to Novalis's administrative position in the salt mines.
- 43 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 44 In the *Encyclopedia*, the “Subjective Spirit” section is divided into three parts: Anthropology, Phenomenology, and Psychology. The opposition between the first and the third terms (reconciled through the second) indicates the way they were thought of during the first half of the nineteenth century: anthropology was not yet understood as the science of “man” as a living totality (which occurs with neo-scholastic philosophy), less yet in its current ethnological acceptance. At Hegel's time, anthropology, still in the post-Cartesian tradition, dealt with the strictly human aspects of theology; it was the science of the human soul and its innate faculties, prejudices etc. From this standpoint, anthropology was juxtaposed with psychology, the science of rational mind. While taking up this juxtaposition, Hegel nonetheless lends new meaning to the terms: anthropology is the study of the soul (*Seele*) as that which is natural (and immediate) in the human mind; the object of psychology is the fully rational mind, i.e. the soul (immediate self-knowledge) that has raised itself through consciousness (self-mediation through others) to the knowledge of the substantial whole. On anthropology in the *Encyclopedia's* Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, see, *Essays on Hegel's Subjective Spirit*, David S. Stern (ed.) (Albany: State University of New York, 2012); Murray Greene, *Hegel on the Soul—A Speculative Anthropology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972); I. Fetscher, *Hegels Lehre vom Menschen* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1970).
- 45 In the present “subjective” context, *Geist* is perhaps best translated as “mind.”
- 46 *Werke* 10, p. 53.
- 47 *Werke* 10, p. 75.
- 48 *Werke* 10, p. 43.
- 49 *Werke* 10, p. 122. In the 1827 edition of the *Encyclopedia*, the subchapter “Feeling Soul” (section [s.] 403) was called “Dreaming Soul.” On the significance of this change, in the 1831 edition, and the roots of Hegel's anthropological considerations in the empirical psychology of the day, see my article, “How the Dreaming Soul Became the Feeling Soul,” in David S. Stern (ed.) *Essays on Hegel's Subjective Spirit*, David S. Stern (ed.) (Albany: State University of New York, 2012) pp. 37–54.
- 50 In Freudian terms, we might say that the negativity of the self is desire and the subterranean world, subconsciousness.
- 51 *Werke* 10, p. 43.

- 52 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Max Müller, second, revised edition (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 26. The Hegelian linkage between the I and time appears clearly in the following excerpt from the *Lectures on Esthetics* regarding music:

The real I itself belongs to time with which, if we abstract the concrete content of consciousness, it coincides; it [the I] is then nothing but this empty movement by which it posits itself as other and suppresses this otherness, conserving there nothing but itself, the I, the I alone. The I is in time and time is the being of the subject. However, as it is time and not extension that furnishes the essential element where sound acquires its musical existence and value and as the time of the sound is also the time of the subject, sound penetrates into the I, seizes it in its simple existence, puts it into movement and draws it into its cadenced rhythm. *Werke* 15, p. 162.

- 53 We return to section 403 of the *Encyclopedia's Philosophy of Spirit*.
- 54 Subjective negativity is expressed as the determining thought, on the theoretical level; as desire on the practical level; and as work, on the ethical level.
- 55 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 56 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403. The term "Schacht" refers to a pit in the mining sense. Hegel uses the same term, in the same context, to signify the unconsciousness, in *Encyclopedia* s. 253. Jon Mills translates the term with "abyss," thereby opening up a swarm of theosophical considerations that lead us astray from the purely biological origins of the unconsciousness, in Hegel, as we will see below. Jon Mills, "Hegel on the Unconscious Soul," *Science et Esprit*, 52, 3, pp. 32–340.
- 57 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 58 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 59 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 60 Once again, this formal dimension is typical of Hegel's conception of subjectivity and seems inspired by the Kantian conception of the understanding as constituted by pure forms of intuition and categories, although Hegel adds the character of negativity, expressed above as the fiery crucible.
- 61 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403
- 62 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 63 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 64 One might say, the *Ur-Ich*.
- 65 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 403.
- 66 The relation between body and soul, in Hegel's anthropology has excited recent interest. See for example, the essays by Angelica Nuzzo and Italo Testa in David S. Stern (ed.) *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*. Both of these authors tend to see the body-soul relation in light of the broader, systematic issue of the relation between spirit and nature, in Hegel. Each author finds in the dynamic interplay between soul and body, evidence for what they refer to as "hylomorphism"

in Hegel, inspired in this by M. Wollf's use of the term in his *Das Körper-Seele-Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie* (1830), §389 (Frankfurt am, Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992). I feel this hylomorphic point of view borrows more from Schelling than it does from Hegel, who, I believe, sees spirit in a more confrontational attitude against the immediacy of nature. Mental illness, for example, as we will see in the following sections, is portrayed as the rebellion of nature (the feeling soul) against the healthy domination of conscious mind (spirit). The natural immediacy of the feeling soul and the body (i.e. corporeality) simply means that mental illness cannot be divorced from the somatic. More generally, spirit is nothing other than the progressive liberation from the natural immediacy. Of course, this process is dialectical and therefore also involves the liberation of nature from itself, i.e. from its own immediacy. However, even here, spirit (as thought) is the liberator. On the relation between nature and spirit, in Hegel, see my "The Fiery Crucible, Yorick's Skull and Leprosy in the Sky: Hegel and the Otherness of Nature."

67 Hegel, *Werke* 10, p. 124.

68 Hegel, *Werke* 10, p. 124.

69 Hegel, *Werke* 10, p. 124. The claim that the normal soul or the unconsciousness is understood through the study of cases of illness seems to prefigure modern (Freudian) psychoanalysis. In fact, Hegel was mainly inspired by the research of Mesmer, Puységur and Pinel. Contemporary authors interested in Hegel's writings on madness seem to neglect the regressive aspect of mental illness and how it serves the study of the healthy unconscious mind. If we ignore this essential aspect, we arrive at the absurd idea that for Hegel the normal development of the healthy mind necessarily passes through a state of madness. Cf. Kirk Pillow, "Habituating Madness and Phantasying Art in Hegel's Encyclopedia," *Owl of Minerva*, 28, 2, pp. 183–215. Allen Olsen, *Hegel and the Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Jon Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

70 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Doctrine of the Concept. *Werke* 6, p. 304. This definition of judgment as an original partition or sharing, expressed as an *Ur-Teilung*, is found in a short text of Hölderlin, "Urteil und Sein," probably from 1795, when the two thinkers still shared the fruits of their philosophical reflections. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* 4 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962) p. 226. On Hegel's ontological grasp of judgment and his debt to Hölderlin, see my "Hegel's Ontological Grasp of Judgement and the Original Dividing of Identity into Difference," *Dialogue*, 45, 1 (Winter 2006) pp. 29–43.

71 Hölderlin, p. 226. Cf. Hegel, *Werke* 6, pp. 304–5.

72 This shows why Hölderlin takes the self-positing I (the I = I of Fichte) as the perfect example of *Ur-teilen*. Hölderlin, p. 226. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Werke* 3, pp. 26–7, 57–63.

73 Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 404. *Werke* 10, p. 125.

- 74 Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 404. *Werke* 10, p. 125.
- 75 Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 404. *Werke* 10, p. 125.
- 76 Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 404. *Werke* 10, p. 125.
- 77 Hegel, *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 404. *Werke* 10, p. 125.
- 78 This does not mean “femininity.” In fact, the expression “feminine nature” that Hegel uses is a pleonasm, since nature is predominantly feminine.
- 79 These Hegelian genetics can be summarized as follows: the natural traits and predispositions grounded in our anthropological soul (what we might today call our genetic code) are transmitted, by magical predication, by the woman (mother); the development or shaping of these dispositions into spiritual manifestations are the result of training (the mother) and education (the father qua schooling). The first expression of this training is habit, an intermediary stage taking place between the soul and consciousness. Hans-Christian Lucas sees this whole movement in the *Philosophy of Spirit* as spirit’s struggle to free itself from nature, in order to become a self. I agree with this, on the condition that we take nature not as something heteronymous but as *our* nature. Generally, in Hegel, we liberate ourselves first and foremost from that which is closest to us. In Freudian terms, the struggle can be seen as normal, healthy liberation from the mother. Similarly, pathology involving a resurgence of the soul (e.g. in Novalis) might be seen as a neurotic manifestation of an Oedipal fixation. Hans-Christian Lucas, “The Sovereign Ingratitude of Spirit Toward Nature,” *Owl of Minerva*, 23, 2, pp. 131–150. Cf. Lydia Morland, “Inheriting, Earning and Owning: The Source of Practical Identity in Hegel’s Anthropology,” *Owl of Minerva*, 33, 2, pp. 139–170. Cf. Jacques J. Rozenberg, “Physiologie, embryologie et psychopathologie: une mise à l’épreuve de la conceptualité hégélienne,” *Archives de philosophie*, 60, 2, p. 253.
- 80 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 405.
- 81 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 405.
- 82 We might say that this idea of mental illness is inscribed in the logic of “hysteria,” as it was understood in the eighteenth century, i.e. as a fundamentally feminine trouble, based in the womb.
- 83 “Diese konzentrierte Individualität bringt sich auch zur Erscheinung in der Weise, welche das Herz oder Gemüt genannt wird,” *Encyclopedia*, s. 405. *Werke* 10, pp. 126–7.
- 84 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 85 The fact that Novalis died of consumption (*Schwindsucht*) allows Hegel to play on the term, particularly since the term, through the verb *schwinden* (= to die away, etc.) might be taken as “aspiration to death,” which happens to be the title of the last of Novalis’s *Hymns to the Night*: *Sehnsucht nach dem Tode*. This might be described as the underlying theme of the *Hymns*, where we find, for example “Darling shadow, pull me in,/ Breath me into the other world!/ That I may at last sleep/ And taste love forever!” Hymn IV, *Schriften* 1, 1977, p. 139. My translation. In any case,



- Schwindsucht* evokes the image of the consumptive seeking to fill himself with air, i.e. with nothingness. Hegel's diagnosis of Novalis's consumption, as resulting from a yearning (*Sehnsucht*) for true objectivity is also found in the Heidelberg *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, where the same diagnosis is applied to Spinoza (who also died of consumption). Although this may seem surprising, ultimately, for Hegel, both Novalis's radical subjectivity and Spinoza's radical substantiality are divorced from true objectivity, which lies in the particular interplay between the two. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft, Heidelberg 1817/18 mit Nachträgen aus der Vorlesung 1818/19, Nachgeschrieben von P. Wannenmann, Becker, C., Bonspielen, W. et al. (eds.)*, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983) pp. 80–1.
- 86 In the above-cited passage from the Heidelberg lectures, Hegel describes the consumptive yearning's (*Schwindsucht*'s) missing objectivity as a "Verschwindendes." Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, pp. 80–1. It should be mentioned that in this context, Novalis's pathological relation to objectivity is presented as the ultimate expression, i.e. the truth, of conscience (*Gewissen*) in its self-certainty.
- 87 Cf. the chapter on Novalis in D. F. Krell, *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).
- 88 This is the general theme in John Russon's important book, *The Self and Its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
- 89 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 408. *Werke* 10, p. 169. In other words, the illness is psychosomatic.
- 90 The corporeal aspect of mental illness allows for purely physical treatments, by pharmaceutical medicines, by work, where the ill are "pulled out of their sick subjectivity and pushed to what is real," and even by swings where, as Hegel reports, fixations are made to "oscillate." *Werke* 10, p. 181.
- 91 Novalis writes very little on irony. In one reference, which Hegel could not have known, he does use irony in an anthropological sense that relates it to *Gemüt*: "Inner soul [*Gemüt*—harmony of all the faculties of the mind—as harmonic play and chord of the entire soul [*Seele*]. Irony = fashion and manner [*Art und Weise*] of the inner soul." *Schriften* 2 (Teplitzer Fragmente 96), p. 613.
- 92 *Encyclopedia*, s. 405. *Werke* 10, p. 124.
- 93 I.e. *Wissenschaft* in the Hegelian sense: the systematic totality of philosophized knowledge as we find it presented in the *Encyclopedia* and taught at the State University. See my "Hegel and the State University: The University of Berlin and its Founding Contradictions," *Owl of Minerva*, 32.1 (Fall 2000).
- 94 *Lectures on Esthetics*, *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 95 "inneren unkünstlerlichen Haltungslosigkeit".
- 96 *Lectures on Esthetics*, *Werke* 13, p. 216.
- 97 *Werke* 13, pp. 46–7

- 98 *Werke* 13, p. 211.
- 99 Hegel could have judged Novalis's work from the following: the poem, "Complaints of a Young Man," published in Wieland's *Neuen Deutschen Merkur* (1791); the fragments "Grains of Pollen," published in the journal *Athenäum* (1798); the essay "Faith and Love, or the King and the Queen," in the *Jahrbüchern der Preussischen Monarchie* (1798); *Hymns to the Night*, in *Athenäum* (1800); and posthumously, the *Spiritual Songs* (1802) and *Henry of Ofterdingen* (unfinished, 1802); and, above all, the first editions of Novalis's *Collected Works* (1802, 1805, 1815, 1826). These collected works, first edited by Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, contained a mass of 538 fragments from diverse sources (the essay "Christianity of Europe" is reduced to a series of fragments), as well as previously published works, such as the *Apprentices to Saïs* (unfinished). If we accept that Hegel distinguished between Novalis's artistic and theoretical productions (which is doubtful), the former aspect would only include the *Hymns* and the *Songs* (expressions of *Sehnsucht*), as well as *Henry of Ofterdingen* and the *Apprentices to Saïs* (both incomplete). Concerning the latter aspect, in Hegel's eyes, a theoretical production in fragmentary form is necessarily unscientific. As well, the nostalgic Catholicism expressed in Novalis's political writings could only further alienate Hegel in his judgments.
- 100 *Lectures on Esthetics*, *Werke* 13, p. 47.
- 101 I have presented Hegel's take on *Gemüt* in terms of a pathological state to which consciousness regresses. Artistic inspiration, where the artist knows his soul, also represents a kind of regression by consciousness, although this return to an earlier, more primitive stage is not defined, strictly speaking, as a sickness. The difference is, above all, that in artistic inspiration, we are not dealing with a *fixation* in the *Gemüt* state. Still, on Hegel's reading, artistic genius might be seen as a sort of temporary madness.
- 102 *Werke* 13, p. 47.
- 103 *Werke* 13, p. 47.
- 104 *Werke* 13, p. 96.
- 105 In Novalis, there is a spirituality of sickness but only to the extent that both it and the suffering it causes are reflected upon, by the one who suffers, as a religious apprenticeship. Among Novalis's thoughts on sickness: "Illnesses, above all the ones that are lengthy, are the years of apprenticeship in the art of living and a school of inner life [*Gemütsbildung*]." *Schriften* 3, fragment 675 (from 1800), p. 686. Or again:

Illnesses are surely a most important matter for humanity [. . .] They are probably the most important subject of our reflection and the most interesting stimulant of our activity [. . .] And if I were to become the prophet of this art? Illness distinguishes man from animals and plants. Man is born to suffer. The more he feels lost, without hope, the more he is capable of morality and religion.

- Schriften* 3, fragment 606 (1800), p. 667. Seduced by the medical “system” of John Brown (two translations of his *Elements of Medicine* had just appeared in Germany) Novalis, in 1798, refers regularly to the opposition sthenic-asthenic. “Novalis’s recognizes in himself a type of constitution propitious to almost all cases of illness: he knows himself to be asthenic.” Roger Ayrault, *Genèse du romantisme allemand*, vol. 3, pp. 509–10.
- 106 *Werke* 20, p. 418. Another reference to Novalis as a beautiful soul is found in the Heidelberg *Lectures* on individual moral conscience, cited above, *Vorlesungen* 1, (Becker, Bonspielen et al, eds., 1983) p. 80.
- 107 There is no theory of the beautiful soul developed in Novalis’s writings. According to the *Schriften* index (vol. 5), the term only appears eight times in his works, and that, within very fragmentary, elliptical references, to Natalie, in Goethe’s *Apprenticeship of Young Werther*, and its chapter, “Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele.” For example, in *Logologische Fragmente II* (*Schriften* 2, p. 561, fragment 175), we find, “Dasselbe Individuum in Variationen. Natalie—die Schöne Seele.” If we wanted to sketch out a “theory” of the beautiful soul in Novalis’s fragments, which were probably unknown to Hegel, we might say that it represents the ideal of humanity, inspired by Schiller’s *Letters on the Esthetic Education of Man* and his *Dignity and Grace*: an unconditioned moral good that remains true and beautiful across history and through different individuals. The point is that in associating Novalis with the beautiful soul, Hegel is not referring to a figure in the latter’s literary production but rather to the romantic author himself.
- 108 This is a first reference to “absolute knowing,” one that consciousness has of itself, at the end of the chapter on Morality, expressed as “God revealing Himself amongst those who know themselves to be pure knowing.” *Werke* 3, p. 494. In other words: “a reciprocal recognition that is absolute spirit.” *Werke* 3, p. 493. The beautiful soul appears one final time, in the *Phenomenology*, in the chapter on Absolute Knowing itself. *Werke* 3, p. 580.
- 109 The first reference to the beautiful soul, in the “Conscience” chapter (*Werke* 3, pp. 483–4) is immediately followed by the moments of hypocrisy and evil.
- 110 See note 106 etc.
- 111 *Werke* 3, pp. 183–4. The reference to “Rede” cannot but suggest a reference to Schleiermacher’s *Reden*. In this sense, the discourse of the beautiful soul (of Novalis) can be seen as the culmination of Schleiermacher’s *Discourses on Religion*. On the language of the beautiful soul, J.-Y. Calvez writes, “Its universe, the universe of the Golden Age, is that of poetry and language. But has not language itself, through this transformation, lost all substance? The sign signifies nothing other than itself, fable and truth coincide. [...] Novalis even prefers the vague adjective, rich in presentiments of an obscure state, but imprecise, incapable of determining an object or a representation.” “L’âge d’or, essai sur le destin de la belle âme chez Novalis et Hegel,” *Etudes germaniques*, 1954, p. 124

(my translation). We might oppose this “Hegelian” view of Novalis’s poetry with that of Volkmann-Schluck, who refers to language’s metaphysical dimension, whose “spell liberates both spirit and nature in a mysterious interplay of wonderful interaction.” “Novalis’ magischer Idealismus” in *Die deutsche Romantik* (ed.) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) p. 52. Novalis: “The enchanter is poet. The prophet is to the enchanter what the man with taste is to the poet.” *Schriften 2 (Anekdoten, fragment 286)* p. 591.

112 *Werke 3*, pp. 489–90.

113 *Werke 3*, p. 491. In his insightful book, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Enlightenment Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), Robert E. Norton presents the beautiful soul as the paradigm of the sentimental morality of the Enlightenment. If he describes as “reductionist” the efforts of certain commentators to understand the beautiful soul and its consumption as “merely making reference to Novalis,” it is because he does not grasp all the speculative dimensions of Novalis’s individuality in Hegel. See p. 280 n.48.

114 *Werke 3*, p. 491.

115 *Werke 3*, p. 491.

116 *Werke 3*, p. 492.

117 *Werke 3*, p. 494.

118 *Werke 3*, p. 493.

119 “Hierdurch sind sie füreinander diese schlechtin Entgegengesetzten.” *Werke 3*, p. 494.

120 If Emanuel Hirsch has trouble attributing this second appearance of the beautiful soul to Novalis, in whom it is indeed difficult to find the “hard heart,” it is because the beautiful soul only represents the end, and the possibility of passing beyond, that figure, rather than the hard heart itself. Hirsch, p. 524. Because Hölderlin did indeed go mad, Hirsch tries to attribute the figure specifically to him, referring to the mention of madness in the passage of the *Phenomenology* (*Werke 3*, p. 491). However, I have shown how the state of *Gemüt* that describes Novalis is first and foremost a mental illness that declares itself physically. In other words, the ending that is represented by the beautiful soul can just as well be psychical as physical, and can readily be applied to the end of the hard heart.

121 While some might be pleased to see this reciprocal recognition, at the end of Morality, as an evocation of community itself, I believe Hegel, here, is presenting the immediate (Protestant) religious community (i.e. Pietism), one that reappears, particularized, historicized, at the end of the Religion chapter, in Revealed Religion.

122 *Werke 3*, p. 494.

123 *Werke 3*, p. 494.

124 In the context of Morality, the expression of absolute knowing is necessarily religious and in this way anticipates the following section: Religion. Absolute

- knowing, as the end of Morality, represents the reconciliation of faith and knowing, as manifest in the Protestant community. At the end of the *Phenomenology*, the absolute reconciliation is that of time and knowing.
- 125 *Werke* 3, p. 580.
- 126 *Werke* 3, p. 580. Calvez (see above) does not bring up this final appearance of the beautiful soul and thus does not go beyond the critical dimension of the figure, in Hegel, without taking its dialectical aspect into account.
- 127 *Werke* 3, p. 580.
- 128 *Werke* 3, p. 491.
- 129 *Werke* 3, p. 580.
- 130 *Werke* 3, pp. 483–4.
- 131 *Werke* 3, p. 482.
- 132 On the specific nature of religious delusions in Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, see my above-cited article, "How the Dreaming Soul Became the Feeling Soul..."
- 133 *Werke* 3, p. 482.
- 134 Pöggeler does not make this distinction and stresses only the fully conceptual grasp of the beautiful soul, in Hegel, as "the reconciliation of the worldly soul with religious and thus absolute knowing." *Hegels' Kritik...* p. 114. Consequently, Pöggeler sees Novalis solely as an *Erwartung* (anticipation), i.e. as the still undeveloped concept and premonition of Hegel's system, hence his avowed difficulty in distinguishing between the two thinkers.
- 135 One cannot escape the Aristotelian resonance in the beautiful soul's absolute dimension, conceived as the self-contemplation of the Prime Mover, as first and final cause. Cf. Hegel's quote from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which "closes" Hegel's *Encyclopedia* (s. 577) and which he uses to express the self-enjoyment of absolute spirit.
- 136 Thus Hegel uses expressions of evaporation to describe the pure loss of such essence in the disappearance of the beautiful soul. In the first passage on conscience, "it disappears like a formless vapor and dissolves in the air." *Werke* 3, p. 484. In the text from the Absolute Knowing chapter, we find its "disappearance in an empty fog." *Werke* 3, p. 580.
- 137 In "Über Anmut und Würde," Schiller presents the beautiful soul as humanity taking on the pure Kantian ideas of the unconditioned moral law. *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1978) p. 468 and note.
- 138 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Werke* 3, p. 572.
- 139 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Werke* 3, pp. 164–5.
- 140 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Werke* 3, pp. 164–5.
- 141 *Werke* 3, p. 495.
- 142 Thus, on the unhappy consciousness, Hegel writes, "Consciousness of life, consciousness of existence and the operation of life itself, is only the suffering regarding that existence and that operation; for it is only the

consciousness of its opposite as being essence, and of its own nothingness.”

*Werke* 3, pp. 164–5.

143 *Werke* 3, p. 549.

144 I.e. a satisfaction that is truly infinite and not the bad infinity of partial satisfactions: “the process of separation and the suppression of an inclination, or an enjoyment attained by another, and the satisfaction that, in fact, is not one, by another, ad infinitum.” *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 478.

145 *Werke* 3, pp. 74–5. In the Introduction, Hegel refers to this self-satisfaction as fleeing the universal. See Carl Rapp’s book, *Fleeing the Universal*, where he applies the Hegelian expression, as referring to Schlegel and Novalis, to postmodern criticism. *Fleeing the Universal: The Critique of Post-Rational Criticism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998).

146 *Encyclopedia, Philosophy of Spirit*, s. 472. Novalis: “That I may at last fall asleep/ And savor love forever./ Death already flows into me/With its restorative flow.” *Hymns to the Night*, Hymn IV, *Schriften* vol. 1, p. 139. Whereas, in Novalis, death brings about an infinite ecstasy, worldly suffering may engender spirituality. “Man is born for suffering. The more he feels lost, without help, the more he is capable of morality and religion,” *Schriften*, vol. 3 (1799–1800, fragment 606), p. 667. “It is said that pain is only self-feeling. [...] Teleology of pain. The reality of pain is the reality of common consciousness, raw. (Common—not separated),” *Schriften*, vol. 3 (Allgemeine Brouillon, fragment 711), p. 404.

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Living things have the privilege of pain, over those without life; living things have within themselves the universality of vitality, which is beyond the singular because in the negation of themselves, they still maintain themselves and feel this contradiction as existing within them. This contradiction is only in them to the extent that these two elements are in one unique subject: the universality of its feeling of being alive and the negative singularity with regard to this.

*Encyclopedia Logic* s. 60.

## Intermezzo 2

1 *Werke* 2, p. 551.

2 “The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy,” *Werke* 2, p. 250.

3 The text is from 1802–3, where Hegel is still under the binary expressions of Schelling’s “logic” of that time, although this form is radicalized, as we will see, through an appropriation of Schiller. The Suhrkamp edition of *Werke* that I have been using does not include this text. Cf. Lasson, G. (ed.) *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1922), pp. 450–1.

- 4 Lasson, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 5 Lasson, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 6 Lasson, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 7 Lasson, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 8 Lasson, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 9 *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, Elizabeth Wilkinson, L.A. Willoughby (ed. and trans.)(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 20.
- 10 *Encyclopedia Logic*, s. 115.
- 11 *Encyclopedia Logic*, s. 115, add.
- 12 *Encyclopedia Logic*, s. 155.
- 13 *Science of Logic*, *Werke* 6, p. 309.
- 14 *Encyclopedia Logic*, s. 39
- 15 In Kant, philosophy “remains caught in the finite and the untrue, i.e. in knowledge that, solely subjective, has as its condition an externality and a thing-in-itself that is a formless abstraction, an empty beyond.” *Encyclopedia Logic*, (1817) s. 33. In Hume, “skepticism [...] takes as its foundation the truth of empiria, of feeling of intuition and challenges from that point universal determinations and laws.” *Encyclopedia Logic* (1830), s. 39.
- 16 “The thinking understanding is thus the source of categories, determinations of thought that are entirely universal. Taken in themselves, they are empty, unfilled, and are based on thought. To be filled, they need material. [...] This filling comes to us from sensitivity, from perception, from intuition, the faculty of feeling etc.” *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, *Werke* 20, p. 346. “One can say that man may, following subjective idealism, have a high opinion of himself. But if his world is the mass of sensible intuitions, he has no reason to be proud of such a world.” *Encyclopedia Logic*, s. 42 add.
- 17 It seems therefore insufficient to present Hegel’s critique of romantic irony, as does Pöggeler, simply as particular subjectivity holding itself separate from the substantial totality, without also fully acknowledging the insult that such a position involves. Ironic subjectivity does now merely hold itself apart from the living substance; as barbarous, it is essentially destructive.
- 18 On the importance of the University of Berlin, as a state university, and how philosophy there can be seen as actively configuring its world, see my article “Hegel and the State University,” *Owl of Minerva*, 32,1 (Fall 2000).

## Chapter 3

- 1 H. F. W. Hinrichs, *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*, Heidelberg, 1822. The Preface is found in Hegel, *Werke* 11, pp. 42–67. For

an English trans. Eric Von der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Religion* (Lewiston/Queenston: Mellen Press, 1987) pp. 245–68. For Schleiermacher's place in the final edition of the *Encyclopedia*, see my "How the Dreaming Soul Became the Feeling Soul Between the 1827 and 1831 Editions of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*: Empirical Psychology and the Enlightenment," in David S. Stern (ed.) *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013). See also my "Hegel's Critique of Schleiermacher as a Critique of Post-modernity," *Clio*, 32, 4 (2003) pp. See also Jeffrey Hoover, "The Origin of the Conflict between Hegel and Schleiermacher in Berlin," *Owl of Minerva*, 20,1 (1988), pp. 69–79.

- 2 The *Soliloquies*, published in 1800, along with the *Speeches* and the "Letters on Lucinde," are from the *Athenäum* period, i.e. when Schleiermacher collaborated in the "symphilosophy" of the journal, which remained nonetheless under the direction of the Schlegel brothers, and particularly Friedrich.
- 3 Since Hegel avoids naming his adversary, one might say that he respects this anonymity well beyond the second (signed) edition of 1806.
- 4 While Hegel does make reference to later Schleiermacher publications, particularly to the *Dogmatics* (*Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, 1821, which contains the *Glaubenslehre*—Doctrine of Belief), he does not recognize any genuine development in his thought. See Hegel's letter to Daub from May 9, 1821.

Schleiermacher, from what I hear, is now also bringing to press a *Dogmatics*. This saying comes to mind: 'For a long time one can get away with paying with tokens but ultimately one has to pull money from one's wallet.' But won't his wallet again produce only tokens? We shall see! His study on predestination (in the *Theological Journal*) struck me as very weak.

Pöggeler makes a similar point: "Thus Hegel does not distinguish between an earlier and a later Schleiermacher but only sees in his development a hardening of concepts ..." *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, p. 245.

- 5 Pöggeler advances this possibility. *Hegels Kritik*, p. 237.
- 6 The fact that Pöggeler believes there may be a first (hidden) reference to Schleiermacher in Hegel's 1800 *Systemfragment*, proving an early convergence of thought in the two thinkers regarding a religion of the heart, if true, would support my idea of an evolution of Hegel's critique that follows the theoretical development of his own thoughts on intuition. According to Pöggeler, such an intuitive religion would be "the last, highest form of Spirit, and superior to all philosophy of the understanding." *Hegels Kritik*, p. 323. My own belief is that Hegel's idea of religion as a form of absolute spirit is never entirely detached from the positivity of religious doctrine, even in his early writings on Christianity. As we will see, however, he does, from 1801, understand



- Schleiermacher's "intuition of the universe" in his own (and Schelling's) philosophical terms, i.e. as a form of intellectual intuition.
- 7 Hegel, *The Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*. Werke 2, p. 13.
  - 8 Hegel, *The Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*. Werke 2, p. 13.
  - 9 In Hegel's Schellingian formulation: "If nature is only material and not subject-object, it does not allow any scientific construction." *The Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*. Werke 2, p. 105.
  - 10 In the first edition of the *Speeches*, Schleiermacher uses indifferently the terms "Universe," "Infinite," "Eternal," and "Absolute" to designate what he avoids calling "God." Schleiermacher: "You have succeeded in making earthly life such a rich and diverse existence that you no longer need eternity, and having created your own universe for yourselves, you no longer have to think of the Universe that has created you." *Speeches on Religion, to Its Cultured Despisers*. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGA), I. 2, 1980, p. 189. "Having religion means grasping intuitively the Universe." KGA, I. 2, 1980, p. 200.
  - 11 *The Difference*, Werke 2, p. 43.
  - 12 That is, the primitive form of what will later be, for Hegel, the concept.
  - 13 Werke 2, pp. 42–3.
  - 14 Schleiermacher's own terms for the total unity are themselves quasi-speculative, in the Hegelian sense: "All the antagonisms are reconciled into the rediscovered unity, where the Universe presents itself as a totality, as unity in plurality, as system [...]" KGA, I. 2, p. 245. "Intuition of the Universe, familiarize yourselves, I ask you, with that notion, in a friendly way; it is the key to my speech; it is the highest, most universal formula of religion." KGA, I. 2, p. 213.
  - 15 Werke 2, pp. 24–5. The interplay of the two presuppositions is captured in Hegel's strange metaphor: "The absolute is the night and the day younger than it [...]"
  - 16 Werke 2, p. 42.
  - 17 Schleiermacher:

What does your transcendental philosophy do? It classifies the universe and its diversity into beings that are one way or another; it seeks reasons behind what exists and establishes, through deduction, the necessity of what is real; it weaves, drawing its material from itself, the reality of the world and its laws. Religion must therefore not insinuate itself into this field.

*Speeches on Religion*. KGA I. 2, p. 208.

- 18 Hegel, "Wastebok Fragments," Werke 2, p. 552.
- 19 Hegel, "Wastebok Fragments," Werke 2, p. 552. For a more developed account of the relation between nature and spirit in the mature Hegel, and a short survey of the vast secondary literature on the question, see my "The Fiery Crucible, Yorick's Skull and Leprosy in the Sky: Hegel and the Otherness of Nature," *Idealistic Studies*, 34, 1 (2004), pp. 99–115.

- 20 *Werke* 2, p. 391.
- 21 *Werke* 2, p. 391.
- 22 Schleiermacher: "Religious feelings, by their very nature, paralyze the energy of man, and entice him to passivity and calm enjoyment." *Speeches on Religion*, KGA, I. 2, p. 219.
- 23 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 391.
- 24 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 391.
- 25 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 391. In the Preface to his French trans. of the *Speeches*, I. Rouge notes that the term "virtuoso" appears 15 times in the 1799 edition, when Schleiermacher is part of the *Athenäum* circle and wants to play, like his friends, at virtuosity. Rouge remarks that virtuosity is distinguished from genius and talent by something "more external, aiming at success, more intentional, less profound." Indeed, the term is replaced in the 1806 edition (e.g. by "Pastor") as Schleiermacher's idea of religion becomes more doctrinal. I. Rouge (trans.), *Discours sur la religion, à ceux de ces contempteurs qui sont des esprits cultivés* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1944), pp. 26–7. According to Schleiermacher, the virtuoso "works to develop, in a new soul, the first feelings of religion." *Speeches on Religion*, KGA, I. 2, p. 273.
- 26 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 391.
- 27 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 391. This is a reference to the *Speeches*, which present themselves as a universal discourse while using the first person singular, addressing itself to those in the second person plural. Schleiermacher:

It is as a man that I will speak of the holy mysteries of humanity as I ponder them, of what was in me while I was still seeking the unknown, with the exaltation and enthusiasm of youth, of that which, since I first began to think and live, is the most intimate spring of my existence, and will remain for me the highest thing [...] It is my divine calling, what determines my place in the Universe and makes of me the being that I am.

*Speeches on Religion*, KGA, I. 2, pp. 190–1.

- 28 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 29 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 30 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 393.
- 31 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 32 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392. Schleiermacher: "An individual religion, as we seek it, can only come about through a particular intuition of the Universe [...] the central point of religion." *Speeches on Religion*, KGA, I. 2, p. 303.
- 33 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 393. In the first edition of his *Speeches*, Schleiermacher goes as far as to postulate as many religions as there are individual intuitions: "Have I spoken of two or three determinate figures [of religion] and said they must be the only ones? No. Innumerable ones must, on the contrary,

- be developed, arising from everywhere, and to he who is unable to adapt to one of those already existing I readily say: he may put together a new one!" *Speeches*, KGA, I. 2, p. 304. Subsequent editions greatly attenuate this statement.
- 34 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 35 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 36 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392. Schleiermacher: "The more each one approaches the Universe, the more each one communicates with each other, the more completely they become one." *Speeches*, KGA I. 2, p. 291.
- 37 *Philosophy of Right*, Section (s.) 270.
- 38 *Philosophy of Right*, s. 270.
- 39 *Philosophy of Right*, s. 270.
- 40 Schleiermacher: "But I am not yet finished my accusations. The State imposes its interests right into the most intimate mysteries of a religious community's spirit, and sullies it." *Speeches*, KGA, I. 2, p. 283.
- 41 That is, Novalis.
- 42 The passage from s. 140 deals with the probabilism, hypocrisy, irony and Schlegel.
- 43 *Philosophy of Right*, s. 270 Remark. The fact that Schleiermacher behaves ironically toward true objectivity by ignoring the State is doubtlessly reinforced, for Hegel, by his rival's support for Professor De Wette in the Sand affair. See "The Polemical Background," below. Pöggeler notes that Schleiermacher, in *Speeches* 4 and 5, promotes the idea (abandoned in later editions) that a fluid multiplicity of communities and virtuosi might make possible a universal church, even while promoting the radical separation between Church and State. *Hegels Kritik*, p. 240. In Schleiermacher, such a separation is based on the primacy of feeling over reasoning, which also guarantees the primacy of the Church over the State (seen as mechanical and instrumental). On the contrary, Hegel promotes the idea of an organic separation between Church and State, according primacy to the latter as an expression of speculative Reason, incorporating the Church as an integral element.
- 44 *Faith and Knowing*, *Werke* 2, p. 392.
- 45 Hegel, Preface to Hinrichs's *Religion*, *Werke* 11, p. 57. For an English trans., see Eric von der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Religion* (Lewiston/Queenston: Mellen Press, 1987), p. 245.
- 46 *Werke* 11, p. 58. Hegel takes the expression "natural man" from Luther's translation of the Bible, and quotes the passage thus: "Der natürliche Mensch vernimmt nichts vom Geiste Gottes und kann es nicht erkennen, den es muss geistlich gerichtet sein." Hegel's is a slightly altered version of the original 1 Cor. 2:14.
- 47 *Werke* 11, p. 58.
- 48 *Werke* 11, p. 58.
- 49 In his *Dogmatics* (i.e. in *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*), Schleiermacher makes

“absolute dependency” the foundational principle of religion. “What every pious emotion has in common is this: that we are conscious of ourselves as completely dependent, i.e. that we feel dependent on God.” *KGA*, I. 7.1, p. 31. In the subsequent passages, Schleiermacher takes pains to distinguish between the feelings of beasts and pious feeling. Although in childhood the two are confused, later “this lower level should disappear from one’s life and the clear distinction between feeling and sensible perception now forms the complete plenitude of sensitive human life.” *KGA*, I. 7.1, p. 34. Pious emotion then appears as a superior step where this opposition is erased, engendering an immediate state of self-consciousness in which each sensation or feeling rests upon a total feeling of dependency. “This primordial feeling of dependency does not thus appear in and for itself within actual consciousness but only as something universal through the mediation of the particular.” *KGA*, I. 7.1, p. 123. In this sense, R. R. Williams states, “Schleiermacher’s turn to *Gefühl* is far from signaling a retreat into subjectivity as other and in contrast to the world, as Hegel apparently believed [...] On the contrary, the turn to *Gefühl* is a turn to the world. *Gefühl* as Schleiermacher describes it, is a Being-in-the-world structure.” “Immediacy and Determinacy in Schleiermacher’s Phenomenology of Self-consciousness,” in *Internationaler Schleiermacher Kongress*, 1984, vol. 1, p. 213. In fact, as we will see, Hegel takes the Schleiermacher’s ironic subjectivity (like romantic irony in general) very seriously as a “being-in-the-world structure.” Otherwise, it wouldn’t pose a problem. O. Pöggeler notes that the image Hegel uses to describe animal dependency is actually taken from Pietistic vocabulary, where it represents Christian devotion. *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, p. 253.

- 50 Pöggeler remarks that Hegel himself refers only rarely to the concept of redemption [*Erlösung*]. *Hegels Kritik*, p. 254.
- 51 Both inner and outer expressions of bestiality can be found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Regarding the dissolution of external, finite objectivity in the universality of sense-certainty, Hegel writes: “Animals themselves are not excluded from this wisdom but rather show themselves to be rather deeply initiated into it; for they do not remain idle before sensible things as if they were something in themselves... but in the absolute certainty of their nothingness, they fall upon them and gobble them up.” *Werke* 3, p. 91. Regarding unilaterally internal feelings: “What is anti-human, what is only animal, is to remain confined to feeling and to be able to communicate only through feeling.” *Werke* 3, p. 65. The term “anti-human” (*Widermenschliche*) allows me to use the terms “bestial” and “bestiality” to translate what might be merely “animal.”
- 52 Hegel’s Preface to Hinrichs’s *Religion*. *Werke* 11, p. 58.
- 53 Hegel’s Preface to Hinrichs’s *Religion*. *Werke* 11, p. 60. Schleiermacher: “The claim that feeling only accompanies [belief] is contrary to experience.” *KGA*, I. 7.1, p. 26.

- 54 *Werke* 11, p. 60.
- 55 *Werke* 11, p. 60.
- 56 *Werke* 11, p. 61. The sybaritic aspect that Hegel finds in Schleiermacher is derived from his friendship with Schlegel and the former's defense of *Lucinde* in "Vertraute Briefe über Friedrich Schlegels *Lucinde*" (1801). Schleiermacher: "All that is human and divine can be found in *Lucinde*; a magical fragrance of holiness emanates from the most inner core and embalms the entire temple, consecrating each one whose senses are not corrupted." *KGA*, I. 3, p. 194. In the *Philosophy of Right* (s. 164 add.), Hegel criticizes the promotion of libertinage that he finds both in *Lucinde* and in the Letters from the "follower," Schleiermacher. *Werke* 7, p. 317.
- 57 *Werke* 11, p. 65.
- 58 *Werke* 11, p. 61.
- 59 *Werke* 11, p. 66.
- 60 Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 229. On the relation between Fichte and Schleiermacher at the University of Berlin, see Claude Piché, "Fichte, Schleiermacher and W. von Humboldt on the Foundation of the University of Berlin," in Fichte, German Idealism and Early German Romanticism, ed. D. Breazeale and T. Rockmore, pp. 371-86 Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. On the relation between Hegel, Schleiermacher, and the Berlin Academy, see Hoffmeister's long note in Hegel, *Briefe*, vol. 3, Johannes Hoffmeister (ed.) (Hamburg: Meiner, 1953) p. 440 n. 2.
- 61 *Briefe*, vol. 2, p. 444 n. 10.
- 62 *Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 449-50.
- 63 Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 231.
- 64 Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 231.
- 65 *Briefe*, vol. 3, Letter 609.
- 66 Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik*, p. 232.
- 67 On Hegel's attitude toward Diez and Storr, see the chapter "Why Didn't Hegel Join the Kant-Klub: Reason and Speculative Discourse," in my *Real Words*, pp. 29-39.
- 68 *Werke* 11, p. 46.
- 69 *Werke* 11, p. 46.
- 70 *Werke* 11, p. 48.
- 71 *Werke* 11, p. 48.
- 72 *Werke* 11, p. 50. Concerning the relation between the theology of doctrine and philosophy, Schleiermacher's position, as stated in his *Dogmatics*, is completely different: "For a long time Christian philosophy [i.e. philosophy] and the doctrine of Christian faith have been engaged in the same work. But this cooperation [...] will become progressively overcome, and dogmatics will progressively get rid of any material association with philosophy." *Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*. §31. *KGA*, I. 7. 1, p. 109.

- 73 *Werke* 11, p. 43. Schleiermacher:

All holy scripture is but a mausoleum for religion, a monument proving that a great spirit has been there, but no longer is. For if it were still lively and active [in scripture], then how could such great value be attached to letters [*Buchstaben*], which can be no more than a pale trace of it? It is not he who believes in holy scripture that has religion but only he who no longer needs it, and even he who would be capable of writing one himself.

*Speeches on Religion*. KGA, I. 2, p. 242.

- 74 Such a (Protestant) community stands necessarily opposed to the monadic community of the religious virtuoso, whose essence is self-certainty, and whose reference to religious text is based on arbitrary and demagogical judgment. Religion, as a content/object of Science, must reach beyond this position.
- 75 *Werke* 11, p. 44.
- 76 *Werke* 11, p. 44.
- 77 *Werke* 11, p. 49.
- 78 *Werke* 11, p. 52.
- 79 *Werke* 11, p. 54.
- 80 *Werke* 11, p. 52.
- 81 See "On Schleiermacher and Postmodernity," in my *Real Words*, pp. 104–16, for a further development of this theme, with references to sociological accounts of postmodernity in François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, and others. Carl Rapp seems to share this point of view, in *Fleeing the Universal: The Critique of Post-Rational Criticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). We must consider this point of view in relation to those who see Hegel's political philosophy as a critique or reevaluation of *modernity*, i.e. of the vision of the State and freedom promoted by the Enlightenment. For example, David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Merold Westphal, *Hegel, Freedom and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Richard Dien Winfield, *Freedom and Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

## Conclusion

- 1 Since the publication of Walter Benjamin's *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik*, Early German Romanticism has been considered the source of "our modernity." For example, Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe and J.-L. Nancy write: "Today, we can detect in most of the important aspects of our 'modernity' a true romantic

unconsciousness.” *L’absolu littéraire*, p. 26 (my translation). The notion of “our modernity” at play in such contexts should, in many respects, be seen as reflecting characteristics that are clearly “postmodern.”

- 2 In *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Charles Taylor defines modernity in terms of a conflict between these two trends: the disengaged-instrumental and the Romantic-expressive. pp. 510–11. I develop this theme, with regard to Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher, in “Hegel on Schleiermacher and Postmodernity,” *Clio*, 32, 4 (2003), pp. 457–72, where I use French sociologists Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Lipovetsky, and François Lyotard to identify these two trends as typically postmodern. In saying that Hegel’s critique of romantic irony can be understood as a critique of postmodernity, I am not using the term in reference to those thinkers often qualified as “postmodern,” e.g. Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault ... The relations between these thinkers and Hegel are, of course, highly complex and worthy of nuanced, serious reflection.

## Coda 1

- 1 Hegel’s judgment can be found in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Schlegel as a decadent derivative of Fichte’s philosophy), in his *Lectures on Esthetics, Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 13, Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 92–99, in his *Philosophy of Right* (§§140 and 164 Additions) and in his *Review of Solger’s Posthumous Writings and Correspondence*. See Otto Pöggeler’s Dissertation, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, Bonn, 1956.
- 2 For example, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy, who write in the introduction to their *L’absolu littéraire*, “Romanticism does not lead us to something we should imitate or that is meant to inspire us, simply because it leads us foremost to ourselves” (Paris: Seuil 1978), p. 10(my translation). In his valuable contribution to the philosophical dimensions of Schlegel’s irony, Gary Handwerk writes, “The modest but long overdue, resurgence of interest in the work of Friedrich Schlegel is encouraging; it suggests a growing recognition that Schlegel anticipated many of the themes central to current critical debate...” *Irony and Ethics in Narrative, from Schlegel to Lacan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 18. For a useful survey of current English-language scholarship, see Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert, “The Revival of Frühromantik in the Anglophone World,” *Philosophy Today*, 49, 1, Spring 2005. Recent French scholarship includes work by Denis Thouard.
- 3 Bern: Francke, 1920 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973).

- 4 Roy Brand puts this eloquently. "The fragments [...] are not anti-systematic; rather, they elucidate the idea that philosophy, like the modern work of art, no longer represents the unity of a closed system but a unity beyond the system. The fragmentary project is an ambitious attempt to find a form of philosophical coherence beyond the compulsion of a system." "Schlegel's Fragmentary Project," *Epoché*, 9, 1 (Fall 2004), pp. 37–8.
- 5 See Ernst Behler's introduction to his *Friedrich Schlegel, Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), p. 16.
- 6 Hegel reduces the Fichtean aspect of Schlegel's thought to individualistic solipsism; Walter Benjamin sees the Fichtean contribution to Early German Romanticism as primarily one of self-reflection (Benjamin [1973], p. 76). This idea is taken up, more recently, by Winfried Menninghaus, *Unendliche Verdopplung: die frühromantische Kunsttheorie im Begriff absoluter Selbstreflexion* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987). Both Milan-Zeibert and Beiser emphasize the antifoundationalism in Schlegel's refusal of Fichte's first principle ( $I = I$ ). However, the key notion of *Wechselerweis* (reciprocal proof) that Milan-Zeibert discovers in Schlegel's theory of knowledge and Beiser's focus on his irony as a conflict between the conditioned and the unconditioned can each be seen as highlighting Schlegelian expressions of the crucial interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) or oscillation (*Schweben*) between the I and the Not-I, in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). Elizabeth Milan-Zeibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
- 7 Roger Ayrault stresses this difference of temperament. *La genèse du romantisme allemand*, vol. 3 (Paris: Aubier, 1969), p. 147. For its depth of erudition and richness of insight Ayrault's work is certainly one of the most important scholarly studies on the *Frühromantik*. According to Ayrault, Schlegel's main debt to Fichte is for the adopted technical vocabulary the former employs. For a helpful, nuanced reading of Schlegel's thought in relation to his contemporaries, see Milan-Zeibert's *Friedrich Schlegel*.
- 8 Schelling taught at Jena until 1800 and was involved with the *Athenäum* circle, contributing his polemical poem (against Schleiermacher) "The Epicurean Confession of Heinz Widerporst," and marrying August Wilhelm Schlegel's ex-wife, Caroline. Schelling's *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* was published in Jena, in 1799.
- 9 Schlegel's fragments occur in three different sets: the Critical Fragments (CF), published in the journal *Lyceum*, in 1797, the *Athenäum* Fragments (A), published in *Athenäum*, in 1798, and the Ideas (I), appearing in the same journal in 1800. The fragments can be found in *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*,



- trans. with an intro. by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971). The translations in this article are my own, although they are informed by Firchow's.
- 10 "A poem is just an object of nature that seeks to become a work of art" (CF 21). Roy Brand derives Schlegel's fragmentary project entirely from the fruitful interplay between subjective freedom and natural necessity in Kant's theory of esthetic judgment, passing over Fichte entirely.
  - 11 Michel Chaouli, *The Laboratory of Poetry, Chemistry and Poetics in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002); Alison Stone, "Friedrich Schlegel, Romanticism, and the Re-enchantment of Nature," *Inquiry*, 48, 1, pp. 3–25. See Gary Handwerk's review of Chaouli's book in *Clio*, 33, 1, pp. 220–225. For an interesting take on how German Romanticism influenced subsequent notions in life science, including Darwinism, see Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
  - 12 See, for example, Raimund Belgardt, *Romantische Poesie* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1969), p. 132, where the author refers to romantic poetry as synthesizing natural feeling and natural science discoveries in galvanism and magnetism to form a new mythology. See also Peter Kapitza, *Die frühromantische Theorie der Mischung* (Munich: Hueber, 1968).
  - 13 For example, Steven E. Alford writes, "Critics have despaired of finding a single meaning to Schlegel's term 'irony'..." *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), p. 17. Alford quotes Benjamin, who makes the same assertion (Benjamin, p. 76).
  - 14 I would like to thank James Gricken for his research on John Brown, presented during my 2007 graduate seminar on Hegel's philosophy of nature. See John Neubauer, "Dr. John Brown and Early German Romanticism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28, 3 (July–September 1967), pp. 367–82.
  - 15 Perhaps the most poignant expression of this dialectic is found in *Lucinde*, in the section, "A Dithyrambic Fantasy on the Loveliest Situation in the World," where Julius evokes for Lucinde their "wittiest and most beautiful" moment, when, in their love-making, they exchange roles, thus creating "a wonderful, deeply meaningful allegory of the development of man and woman to full and complete humanity" (Firchow, p. 49).
  - 16 See Schlegel's essay "On Incomprehensibility," where he writes: "I wanted to show that the purest incomprehension emanates precisely from science and the arts—which by their very nature aim at comprehension and at making comprehensible—and from philosophy and philology." Further on: "[E]verything is going to become more and more critical, and artists can already begin to cherish the just hope that humanity will at last rise up in a mass and learn to read" (Firchow, pp. 260, 261).

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